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# INDIA

AS KNOWN TO

Ancient and Mediaeval Europe

PRAPHULLACHANDRA GHOSH, M.A.

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Thou art the garden of the world, the home  
 Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;  
 Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?  
 Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste  
 More rich than other climes' fertility.

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## P R E F A C E .

The present Essay was written some time ago to compete for a gold medal offered by Mr. J. Macfarlane of the Imperial Library, Calcutta.

In presenting it to the public I do not make any pretension to antiquarian scholarship. My humbler and more modest aim has been to give a popular and systematic account of European intercourse with and ideas about India before the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. With this in view I have carefully gone through, in translations, as many of the classical writers bearing upon the subject as I could get hold of, and have also availed myself of the labours of several well-known Orientalists. Adjoined is a list of the authorities I have drawn upon, authorities whom it would be presumption in me even to praise. Indeed no Indian can contemplate the services rendered to the history and antiquities of his own country by European scholars without a mingled feeling of gratitude, admiration and shame. It is true that the number of men possessing a real knowledge about India is very small in Europe, but it is not less true that wherever this knowledge exists, it is deep, wholesome and pure. It resembles a deep though narrow pool rather than a wide but shallow sheet of water.

The subject of our discourse is one the charm of which can never go. If, therefore, the present treatise should prove distasteful to some, the blame certainly will be wholly mine. Indeed none can be more painfully aware than myself of its many defects, and but for the importunities of my friends I should not have rushed so soon into print. "Keep back your manuscript for nine years in the desk" was the wholesome advice of

Horace and I should have followed it to the letter. The die, however, is cast and I send forth my book with all its imperfections on its head and am as ready for the hard knocks of a Jeffrey as for the kindly strokes of a lenient critic.

CALCUTTA : *October*, 1905.

## **Authorities Consulted.**

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  2. „ Ancient India as described by Arrian and Megasthenes.
  3. „ Invasion of India by Alexander the Great.
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- &c. &c.**



## INTRODUCTION.

There is a very well-known passage in Macaulay's Essay on Lord Clive in which the great reviewer regrets the total lack of interest in Indian affairs shown by Englishmen in general. "We doubt", he writes in his own telling fashion, "whether one in ten even among English gentlemen of highly cultivated minds can say who won the battle of Buxar, who perpetrated the massacre of Patna, whether Suraja-Dowlah ruled in Oudh or in Travancore, or whether the Holkar was a Hindu or a Mussalman." Things have mended a great deal since Macaulay's time, but still India is not as widely known and her peoples as thoroughly appreciated as one would expect. There are men in Europe even to-day to whom India is nothing more than a word of five letters. If such be the case in the present days of friendly and frequent intercourse, of steamships and submarine telegraphs, what knowledge of India can we fairly expect in an ancient Greek or Italian who, in the infancy of navigation, could hardly quit his native shores in the perilous quest of remote and unknown regions? Over land the route lay through hostile countries and dreary deserts, while want of good vessels and nautical instruments greatly enhanced the perils of the sea. Interests of trade and commerce did of course in time necessitate the opening of an intercourse with India; but at first it was possible only through the medium of some other nations such as the Arabs. Even when means of direct intercourse had been established, the voyages undertaken were unusually long and the accounts brought back by travellers and navigators proverbially false. Strabo, a contemporary of Augustus, speaks of this difficulty of getting correct information



about India. He writes : "I must ask the reader to receive my description of the country with some indulgence, for it lies at a great distance off, and not many persons of our nation have seen it ; such as have visited its shores have seen a part of it only and their accounts consist chiefly of what they heard from report...Hence they give us conflicting accounts of the very same things, though they write about them as if they have very carefully examined them...The merchants of the present day, who sail from Egypt to India by the Nile and the Arabian Gulf, have seldom made a voyage as far as the Ganges. They are ignorant men and unqualified for writing an account of the places they have visited."\* Such being the state of affairs for a good many centuries, we must not look too critically into the European accounts of India previous to the time of Vasco da Gama, some of which are noticed below.

For convenience' sake we shall break up the subject into two parts, *viz.*, 1°, European accounts of India *before* the Christian Era, and 2°, European accounts of India *about* and *after* the Christian Era. These two, again, are themselves capable of several subdivisions, as we shall see later on.

## **I. European Accounts of India *before* the Christian Era.**

As regards the first period of our enquiry, the great landmark subdividing it into two is the Macedonian Invasion of India [B.C. 327], which served to make the prevailing ideas about that country more definite and wide. During the first half of the period some sort of commercial relation had been established between the East and the West, but our knowledge of it is only conjectural and seldom based

\* *Strabo: Geogr.* XV. 2. 4—*McCrindle*.

upon the *direct* evidence of written records. The first definite mention of India and some imperfect accounts of it are to be found in the writings of the Greeks.

## **Western intercourse with India in the pre-Christian Age:—**

### **(a) *The Egyptians.***

Among the nations of antiquity the Egyptians are said to have been the first to import commodities from the East. Thus we read in the Book of Genesis [*cir.* 1729 B. C.] of the “Ishmeelites coming from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh” and “going to carry them down to Egypt” (XXXVII. 25). It is of course difficult to say whether in the present case the articles came from India, but generally speaking it is more than probable that Eastern commodities were in request in the land of the Pharaohs. Indigo, for instance, which is peculiarly an Indian produce, has been microscopically detected in the blue stripes of some Egyptian mummy cloths.\* This trade, however, must have been indirect and conducted through the medium of the Arabs, who are pointed out alike by history, tradition and local situation, to have been the first carriers of Indian produce and the first navigators of the Indian seas. Soon, however, the self-centred Egyptians, blessed with the gifts of Father Nile, turned their attention away from commerce and came to look upon foreign intercourse as something profane and impious. Nothing has been found to show that ancient Egypt ever came into *direct* contact with India,† excepting of course the alleged con-

\* *Royle's Essay on the Antiquity of Hindu Medicine*, p. 137.

† It is not unlikely that the discoveries now in progress in Egypt may bring up evidences of its intercourse with India during those days. That there was some sort of intercourse there is no reason to doubt. As regards the points of resemblance between ancient Egypt and ancient India, see *Royle's Essay* pp. 129-137.

quest of the latter country by the half-mythical Sesostris, as recorded by Diodorus Siculus.\* He is said to have "crossed the Ganges and penetrated the whole of India even to the ocean." Dr. Robertson,† after giving the whole thing a careful examination, justly dismisses it as "an invention of the Egyptian priests."

*(b) The Phœnicians.*

Meantime a nation arose whose wealth and fame rested alike on commerce. The Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon were the most enterprising navigators in the ancient world. Their country was not rich or fertile and the only wealth they could hope to obtain was through commerce. The genius of the nation was, therefore, entirely commercial. "They," as Dr. Robertson‡ has said, "aimed at the empire of the sea and actually possessed it." Tyre became 'the crowning city whose merchants were princes, whose traffickers the honourable of earth.'§ This 'mart of nations'¶ was filled with all sorts of rich merchandise from precious stones to 'purple and brodered work.'¶ She carried on a brisk trade with the East by the Red Sea "as well as along the caravan road from the shores of the Persian Gulf"<sup>b</sup> to the

\* *Diod. Sic. lib. I. cap. 43.* Nolan.

† *Robertson's Disquisition: App. I.*

‡ *Hist. of America*—Introduction.

§ *Isaiah XXIII 8.*

¶ *Ib. 3.*

¶ *Ezek. XXVII. 16.*

<sup>a</sup> The Phœnicians wrested from the Idumæans some commodious harbours towards the bottom of the Arabian Gulf. The distance, however, from that gulf to Tyre being considerable, they afterwards took possession of the nearest Mediterranean port of Rhinocolura. Thither were carried overland all the commodities which were thence re-shipped to Tyre. See *Robertson's Disquisition* pp. 7-8.

<sup>b</sup> "Long before the Persians had made themselves masters of Babylon *i.e.*, 561 B. C., the Phœnicians had established themselves for pearl-fishery and the Indian trade on the isles of Tylos and Aradus, the modern Bahrein Islands, in the Persian Gulf."—See *Royle's Es. v. p. 122.*

Mediterranean coast of Syria. The articles of her trade were the produce of various countries and at this distance of time it is a matter of the greatest difficulty to sift out those that were purely Indian. It is not unlikely that her cinnamon and aloes, her onyx and agate, her diamond and gold, her ebony and tin, her embroidered work and chests of rich apparel came from the Indian continent. That such an assumption is not altogether unfounded will appear from the following considerations. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel which contains an inventory of the articles of Tyrian commerce, mention is made of 'the horns of ivory and ebony' brought by 'the men of Dedan.\*' These seem to have been Indian products, as ebony and ivory are ascribed pre-eminently to India by classical writers from Megasthenes† and Theophrastus‡ down to Virgil§ and Horace.|| Again scholars¶ have pointed out that the Phœnician word for 'tin' was an exact copy of its Sanskrit equivalent. The Greeks got their tin from the Phœnicians and also imported the name of the article into their language. This may appear from Homer's use of '*kassiteros*' for 'tin' which is an exact echo of the Sanskrit '*kastira*.' With one more evidence we shall close our notice of Phœnician commerce. Homer refers in several passages to the skill of the Sidonian artists. The silver vase proposed by Achilles as a prize in the funeral games held in honour of Patroclus, is said to have been a work of 'the Sidonian artists'; "the garment which

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\* The Bahrein Islands are supposed by some to be the Dedan of Scripture—See *Royle's Essay* p. 122.

† *Strabo* XV. 37.

‡ Quoted by McCrindle in his *Ancient India as described by Classical Authors*, p. 46.

§ *Georg.* II. 116-17 ("India alone produces **black** ebony"); *Georg.* I. 57 ("India sends ivory.")—Lonsdale and Lee's Transl.

|| *Odes* I. 31.

¶ *Götze* quoted in the *Ency. Biblica* Vol. IV **Art. Trade and Commerce.**

*a* II. XXIII, ll. 865-70. (Pope).

Hecuba offers as a propitiatory gift to Minerva is attributed to Sidonian women.\* But a close examination of such passages has convinced experts like Sir George Birdwood that these articles of luxury, though latterly produced in Sidon itself, came originally from India.† Thus 'the twelve costly carpets of refulgent hue' and 'the garments stiff of gold' with which poor Priam seeks to buy back the body of his son,‡ had their originals in the Indian *kincobs* and Indian *satarangis* which have from time immemorial been articles of western trade. Sir George Birdwood quotes a number of Homeric passages describing costly garments and says that "they are photographic vignettes from any wealthy Indian's house and in copying them one seems to breathe again the very odour of the costly spikenard with which they are usually wrapped up."§

### (c) *The Jews.*

The vast wealth acquired by the Phœnicians through commerce roused in the neighbouring Jews an honest spirit of emulation. Before the time of David and Solomon we have no evidence of foreign trade being carried on by them, though there are references to extensive caravan routes in several passages of the Old Testament. Along these were probably carried on some inland trades not deserving of any lengthy notice. During the rule of Hiram [B.C. 980-917] the Tyrians were in the friendliest relations with the Jews under

\* *Il. VI, ll. 358-67* (Pope).

† This conclusion must, I am afraid, be regarded as only a conjecture, having no positive evidence to support it. "The poetry of the needle" was cultivated as much in ancient Greece, Tyre, Phrygia, and Babylon as in ancient India and there seems to be no reason why we cannot regard it of independent growth in each of these countries. The Greeks ascribed its invention to Minerva and prompt was her punishment of the luckless *Arachne* for daring to doubt her supremacy in the art.

‡ *Il. XXIV, ll. 281-4* (Pope).

§ *Industry & Arts of India*. pp. 263-4.

David and Solomon. The two nations were in the full bloom of their power and each could supply what the other wanted. Hence their close alliance which led even to combined commercial enterprises. David's conquest of Idumœa\* (*Cir* 1040 B.C.) and the establishment of a seaport at Ezion-Gaber† (*Cir* 992 B.C.) by Solomon set spurs to this new spirit among the Jews. It was from Ezion-Gaber that the ships of Solomon started under the guidance of the mariners of Hiram for distant lands.‡ They brought back once in three years the gold of 'Ophir,'§ its almug trees and ivory, apes and peacocks. By 'almug trees' is probably meant red sandalwood and scholars have caught in the Hebrew words for ape, peacock and ivory a distinct Sanskrit ring.|| This has led to the surmise that Ophir, or Sophara, as it is written in the Septuagint, must have been some place in India, if it did not mean India itself. The name of Soupara, a western seaport of India mentioned by Ptolemy¶ and identified with a place six

\* *II Sam.* VIII. 14.

† *I Kings.* IX. 26.

‡ *Ib.* 27

§ *Ib.* X. 11,22.

|| *Mar Müller's Science of Lang.* Sixth Ed. Vol I. pp. 230-4. See also *Dr. Caldwell's Grammar of the Dravidian Language*, 1875, p. 91—The Hebrew word for peacock (*tukkim*) echoes exactly "the ancient, poetical, purely Tamil-Malayalam word for the bird (*tokei*); Sansk. *sikhi*, Tamil *siki*." As regards the others, the Hebrew *kof* seems to be the Sanskrit *kapi* (monkey) and the latter part of the word *shenhabhim* (ivory) the Sanskrit *ibha* (elephant).

¶ McCrindle's *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy* pp. 40-41. See also *Cunningham's Geography of Ancient India* pp. 496 and 561 for his identification of Ophir with the *Suvira* of the Ramayanam. Cunningham also informs us that *Safir* was the Coptic name for India. For various other conjectures see *Dr. Nolan's History of the British Empire in India and in the East*, Vol. I.

To settle the Ophir question we have to embark upon a wide sea of conjecture, with neither chart nor compass to guide us. Country after country has been brought up and sought to be identified with this mythical Eldorado of the ancients. India, Ceylon, Peru, and now Rhodesia have each had its turn in the affair. Lassen was the strongest supporter of the Indian theory; but Mr. James Kennedy, in a paper read before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1898, has brushed it aside with the remark that he can find "no archæological or literary evidence of a maritime trade with India prior to the seventh century B. C."

miles to the north of Bassein, figures conspicuously in connexion with this discussion.

But a commercial spirit was then an exotic in the Judaic mind and did not thrive under the blighting influence of national exclusiveness. The impulse given by Solomon kept the wheel of mercantile enterprise going for a hundred years or more—for we read of the destruction of the fleet of Jehoshaphat, the fifth in descent from Solomon, which had started on a voyage to Tarsish—but it gradually came altogether to a stop.

As has been said already there is nowhere any *direct* mention of western intercourse with India during the period we have just traversed. Our knowledge is enveloped completely in darkness. Our conclusions thus far are at best mere surmises hanging upon the slender thread of conjectural evidence. The discovery of a single fact to the contrary may break the thread and consign all this to the limbo of inanity. It is in the writings of the Greeks that we first meet with the western accounts of India, however distorted and meagre. From these come the first glimmerings of the dawn of European knowledge about this country.

#### *(d) The Greeks.*

That there was some intercourse between Greece and India long before the days of Alexander it would be very rash to deny. How else can we account for the striking similarities between some Greek and Indian systems of philosophy?\*. A common origin of the two races and a chance coincidence are explanations which may suffice for the analogy between the Greek and the Indian mythology

\* See Macdonell's *History of Sansk. Literature* pp. 421-2. The learned professor believes in "the historical possibility of the Greeks having been influenced by Indian thought through Persia." p. 422.

but which will not carry us very far in the solution of the above question. We must needs take shelter under the possibility of an Indo-Hellenic intercourse, however interrupted and feeble, for several centuries before Alexander the Great, though we need not go so far as Mr. Pococke\* to assert that Greece itself was an Indian colony.

We are not, however, concerned so much with this discussion as with the ideas held by the ancient Greeks about India and her people. But there are a few things that we must bear in mind in our examination of these ideas.

***The general worth of the Greek accounts of India.***

Lord Rosebery, in his well-known book called "Napoleon: The Last Phase," has said that "if any one wishes to study seriously Napoleon's life at St. Helena, it is necessary first to feel one's way through the maze of legendary literature to arrive at any chance or possibility of facts, it is necessary to discard copiously until at last one may doubt if anything be left." This with even a greater force might be said of most of the early Greek accounts of India. Men in those days were not at all so critical as men now. Even educated and grown-up persons had then a ravenous stomach for the grotesque and the fabulous which a twentieth century child of ten would find difficult to swallow. Hence the strange muddling together of facts and fictions which we find in these ancient histories. Surely Voltaire's splenetic definition of history as *fable convenue* would find ample justification in their case.

In extenuation, however, of the faults of these writers it may be said that none of them before Alexander's time had ever visited India personally, their information having been chiefly derived from isolated accounts brought back by travellers. Even when Alexander's expedition brought the Indians into direct contact with the Greeks,

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\* See his book entitled "*India in Greece.*"



the time of that intercourse was too short for the writers of the Macedonian camp to make a thorough study of the manners and customs of their opponents. The difficulty also of their knowing a country so new and so different from their own should be taken into consideration. Moreover the part of India which they had seen, or of which they had heard, was too small to give them any definite ideas about the whole of it. These facts being remembered we must remain satisfied with what truths we find in these writers. Megasthenes alone has a great many facts to relate, as he was for a long time in this country.

The Greek nomenclature of Indian places has often distorted their names out of recognition for the modern reader and thus the key to the topographical portion of these accounts has in not a few cases been completely lost to us. The Greeks, however, were not peculiar in their distortion of foreign names, the same tendency being found in every other nation; and their Hellenising of Indian names was certainly not worse than the mysterious process by which among the ignorant European soldiery of the present day, Sirajud-Daula has been converted into a belted knight, "Sir Roger Dowler", and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk into that delightful beverage, "*Cha*, sugar and milk". \*

### ***The Mythological portion of these accounts.***

The mythological portion of these Greek accounts scarcely deserves any notice. Bacchus is said to have honoured India with a visit and to have left some descendants in the Punjab called *Oxydrakai* by the followers of Alexander. The origin of this queer fancy, according to Strabo,† was simply that the Punjab was the only part of India which grew ivy and vine and that the aboriginal people

\* *Elliot's History of India Vol. I, App. p. 516.*

† *Strabo. XV. 7.-8.—McCrindle.*

mentioned above displayed great pomp in their processions, their kings setting out on military expeditions in the Bacchic fashion. Thus also, says Strabo, grew the fable that Herakles came to India to unbind Prometheus who was taken by the superstitious Macedonians to have been chained to the Indian Caucasus (Hindukush). Herakles also, like Bacchus, left some descendants in that country who wore skins and carried clubs like him. These fables were supposed true even by Megasthenes who recorded that these two gods were worshipped by the Indians even to his own day. \*

### *Supposed references in Homer.*

Leaving these stories about gods and demi-gods to take care of themselves, we now come to purely human affairs. We find no mention of India in Homer. When, however, he called tin "*kassiteros*" he talked good Sanskrit without ever having known it and no doubt would have been as much astonished, if the fact was pointed out to him, as Molière's *bourgeois* was when he awoke to the fact that he had been talking prose all his life. That Homer was aware of the existence of a dark-complexioned race of men towards the east appears from some of his passages. He mentions 'the righteous Ethiopians' as living on 'the extremest limits of the ocean,' both to the east and to the west. It has been assumed by some that the distant Ethiopians to the east signified the Indians. This view of Indians as Ethiopians and of India as a part of Ethiopia continued for a long time as we shall see later on and finds its exact counterpart in our own age when the Indian is, in the eyes of some who ought to know better, only a "nigger" at the best.

\* But from his descriptions of these gods it is evident that *Shiva* and *Vishnu* (*Krishna*) of the Indian mythology were meant—see *Macdonell's History of Sansk. Lit.* p. 411.

***Pythagoras.***

Next comes a gap of a few centuries after which the name of Pythagoras occurs in connexion with India. That celebrated philosopher lived in the sixth century B. C. and is said to have undertaken long and extensive travels over Egypt and Asia as far east as India. There is no contemporary and positive evidence of his coming to India\* but it is probable that his doctrine of metempsychosis, his asceticism, his vegetarian principles, and the large part played by numbers in his metaphysical system, were the results of his intercourse with the “gymnosophists” of India.

***Herodotus.***

Passing by Hekateus (*cir* 6th century B.C.) whose ‘Geography,’ now lost, contained some Indian names we go on at once to Herodotus (450 B.C.), the ‘Father of History.’ In his account of India, which is the first definite one that we have, mention is made of Scylax, the Caryandian, who was sent by Darius to explore the mouth of the Indus on the eve of his expedition to India. Scylax sailed from ‘the city of Caspatyrus† and the country of Pactice,’ and after a long voyage of thirty months reached the shores of Egypt. His report was probably very encouraging and induced Darius to conquer some portion of the country. But unfortunately the account which Scylax had left of his impressions is now totally lost and what we know of it is from the scattered references to it in

\* Prof. Macdonell supposes that Pythagoras did not come to India but that he might well have met Indian philosophers in Persia. See his *Hist. of Sansk. Lit.* p 422.

† Identified by some with Kabul, by others with Kashmir. In Ptolemy’s *Geography* ‘Kashmir’ appears in the form *Kaspeiria*. On the latter supposition Jhelum would be the river on which Scylax embarked. The city is called *Kaspapyros*, a city of the Gaudharians, by Hekateus. Gandhar was the modern Peshwar district. Any way the exact site cannot be identified.

subsequent writers, chief among whom was Herodotus.\* To Scylax can be traced† the long tissue of fabulous stories about one-eyed men, about men sleeping in their ears, and other wonderful creatures, which runs through the pages of Ktesias, Megasthenes, Pliny and others down to those of Sir John Maundeville.

According to Herodotus the Indian province of Darius was the richest and the most populous of the twenty satrapies into which that monarch divided his empire ; and it paid him an annual tribute of 360 talents of gold dust. ‡ It is in this connexion that Herodotus tells us the famous fable about gold-digging ants. These ants were about the size of dogs and abounded in the gold districts near the source of the Indus.§ They formed their habitation underground and heaped up sand intermixed with gold. When any persons went to procure this golden dust they were chased and killed if overtaken by these ants.

The country was a land of many rivers and of many tongues and was the farthest part of the inhabited world, being bounded on the east by sandy deserts.|| Thus it seems that the India of Darius and Herodotus did not extend beyond the Indus. The inhabitants, who were mostly swarthy, fell into three distinct classes : 1°, the *Ichthiophagoi* who ate raw fish, inhabited marshy grounds and carried a garment made of rushes ; 2°, the *Pandæans* who were nomadic, who ate raw flesh and among whom old and sick persons were killed for food ; and lastly 3°, those who did

\* *Herod. IV. 44—McCrindle.*

† *McCrindle's Ktesias p. 60.*

‡ *Herod. III. 97.*

§ It may be interesting to learn that mention is made in the *Mahabharat (Sabhā-Parv)* of these gold digging ants. This shows that it was a current Indian story which found its way into the pages of Herodotus.

|| *Herod. III. 98.*

not kill any life nor sowed anything but lived upon herbs. These men had no houses, but when they fell ill, went into the forest where they laid themselves down to die. \* It is not difficult to detect the Hindu sages under this last class and the aborigines of the Punjab under the first and the second. Herodotus speaks of "the wool growing on trees more beautiful and valuable than that produced from sheep",† being evidently struck by the newness of the thing. He also says that there was an Indian contingent in the army of Xerxes, clad in cotton garments and armed with cane-bows and iron-tipped cane arrows.‡

This is the substance of Herodotus' account. 'Meagre and vague and nebulous' as it is, it is still the first definite one we meet with in the writings of the ancients.

### *Ktesias.*

The notice of one more writer brings us down to the time of the Macedonian invasion. This was Ktesias who for a long time was the royal physician of Persia. His *Indika* composed about 398 B.C., is the *first special treatise* on India given to the Greeks and it lives for us in an abridgment by Photius, a Byzantine of the ninth century. Contrary to all expectations this good man of physic was peculiarly deficient in the critical faculty

\* Herod. III. 98-100.

† *Ib.* 106. It may be suitable to mention here that cotton was indigenous to India. It was unknown to ancient Egypt as it is never found in its tombs, the mummy cloths being invariably detected to be linen (See *Royle's Essay* p. 129). Cotton is mentioned in the Bible in recording a very late event. See *Esther* I. 6., where Ahasuerus is said to have made a great feast, among the decoration of which were "white, green and blue hangings." Scholars have pointed out that the Hebrew word translated "green" in this passage is *Karpas* which is also a Sanskrit word meaning cotton. (See *Royle's Essay* p. 145 and *Sir G. Birdwood's Industrial Arts of India* p. 242.) Again, Royle has pointed out that the Latin *carbasus* used for sail by Virgil and Cicero, for fine cloths by Propertius and for fine tent cloths by Pliny, came from *Karpas*.

‡ Herod. VII. 63; VIII. 13; IX. 91.

and was only too eager to gulp in the most egregious fables current about India in the Persian court. In his hands India became what it afterwards did in Sir John Maundeville's, a veritable "land of marvels". His book is full of old wives' tales\* about large and four-footed birds called griffins† guarding the gold that was found in the mountains, about snub-nosed pygmies who were skilful archers and whose beards and hair trailed down to their very feet.‡ He repeats the Homeric fable of the wars of the Cranes and the Pygmies, and speaks of the *kynokephaloi* or dog-faced men having large and shaggy tails, who lived in the mountains, subsisted by the chase, wore garments of skin as well as of cotton and lived up to the pretty good age of two hundred years.§ The *ekaipodes* or one-footed men could hop upon their one leg with wonderful agility and could shade themselves with it from the sun. There was a fountain of liquid gold which had also a large quantity of iron at the bottom. This iron had the power of averting clouds and hail and thunder-storms. Another fountain had this peculiarity that the water drawn from it

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\* It may generally be noted here that in Sanskrit literature frequent mention is made of such chimerical creatures as horse-mouthed men (the *kinouras*), pygmies only a few inches high (the *Valakhiṭṭa Munis*), long-eared men (the *Lamba-karnas*) and others. In many cases these fables only exhibit the Aryan contempt for the aboriginal races of India.

† Herodotus had also mentioned them (III. 116. IV. 13). Readers of Milton will remember the fine allusion made to these creatures in *Par. Lost* II. 913 sq.

‡ The Pygmies (men of the height of a *pygmy*, 13½ inches) are also placed by some writers in Ethiopia, although Milton speaks of "the Pygmean race beyond the Indian mount." They were probably the prototypes of the elves and gnomes of European folklore and have their representatives even to-day in various parts of the world. The stories of African exploration have made us familiar with the ways of these quaint little folk and the London public have already had an opportunity of welcoming Col. Harrison's little band of African Pigmies whose stature averages 4ft. 4in.

§ Similarly the Cubans described the Caribs to Columbus as man-eaters with dog muzzles; and the old Danes had tales of *kynokephaloi* in Finland. Marco Polo also describes the Andamans as being inhabited by dog-faced cannibals. See Yule's Ed. (1903) Vol. II. p. 309.

congealed to the thickness of cheese. If a certain quantity of this was given as a dose to a guilty person he confessed all his transgressions. Ktesias' reports on Indian animals were made use of by Aristotle in his book on zoology, who calls him 'a writer not to be trusted.'<sup>\*</sup> According to Ktesias no swine, either tame or wild, was to be found in India and he mentions the unicorn ass, cups made from whose horn had the virtue of protecting persons from certain diseases and from poison.<sup>†</sup> There was also a bird not bigger than the egg of a partridge, whose dung first produced sleep and then death. The Indian jackal could imitate the human voice, had the strength of a lion and the swiftness of a horse. Ktesias, however, is consistent with truth in his account of the cochineal plant, the worm and the dyes made from it. He mentions the monkey and the parrot, the elephant and probably also the tiger (*martikhôra*=man-eater<sup>‡</sup>). He praises the Indians for their sense of justice, their devotion to the king and their contempt of death. Of the Aryan Hindus we learn nothing from Ktesias except that their complexion was fair. They are said to have been free from headache or toothache or ophthalmia and from mouth-sores or ulcers in any part of their body. They generally attained the age of 120 years before they died. But there were a people to the north who lived even 400 years.<sup>§</sup> Ktesias mentions the Indus and the river

\* *De Hist. Anim.* VIII. 28 - *McCrindle*.

† Similar superstitions with regard to drinking vessels were prevalent in the West as well. The very word *amethyst* points out the old belief that cups made of that mineral prevented drunkenness. The vessels of Venetian glass were supposed in the middle ages to have possessed the peculiar property of shivering into pieces if any poison was put into them.

‡ Is it a slip made by the copyist of the *Indika* for *mantichoras*, a well-known fabulous beast supposed to have had a human head?

§ This is a current Indian belief even to the present day. The Lamas of Thibet are generally considered to be very long lived and there are Hindu sages who claim almost a patriarchal age for themselves.

*Hyparkhos* by which he probably meant the Ganges, and gives us the information that no rain ever fell in India.\*

Enough has been written to indicate the nature of Ktesias' account in which the fables have all but choked up the facts. Of him might be said what Bassanio says of Gratiano in the *Merchant of Venice* that "his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them and when you have them, they are not worth the search."

### *Alexander's Expedition.*

Then comes the epoch-making expedition of Alexander the Great. It was he who first penetrated into the remote regions of the East and opened up their wonders to the astonished eyes of the West. To him belongs the glory of advancing Greek knowledge about a portion of the world outside, as well as of making the power of Greek arms felt far and wide. Endowed with rare gifts of the head, he soon conceived the idea of making his projected empire 'the centre of commerce as well as the seat of dominion.'† Accordingly after the destruction of Tyre and the conquest of Egypt, he founded Alexandria on a mouth of the Nile, which by virtue of its situation, became the greatest *entrépot* of trade between the East and the West. But the ambition of Alexander lay further. He aspired to acquire for himself 'the untouched treasures of opulent India,'‡ and accordingly led his army into that country.

Every schoolboy knows the general details of Alexander's invasion of India, memoirs of which were written by some of the eminent men of science and letters who had

\* This last fact is characteristic of Sindh and portions of the Punjab. Here we have another indication that the Greek knowledge of India, previous to the time of Megasthenes, was confined to the Punjab.

† Robertson's *History of America* (1848) p. 12.

‡ Horace: *Odes* III. 4.



accompanied him into the Punjab. These invaluable memoirs are now totally lost, but they furnished materials to subsequent writers among whom were Arrian and Strabo, Plutarch and Justinus, Diodorus and Curtius, and whose accounts are the only extant sources of our information about the Macedonian Invasion of India.

Issuing out of the mountain passes which connect India with Afganistan, Alexander crossed the Indus somewhere near Attock. He then pushed his conquests as far eastward as the Beas (*Hyphasis*), when his progress was stayed by the unwillingness of his army to proceed any further.\* They had suffered so much and it was so long since they had left their home. The great conqueror, who, however, failed to conquer the objections of his troops, had thus to set bounds to his ambition which had extended itself to the conquest of the rich and fertile plains watered by the Ganges unto the very limits of the ocean itself. He had no way but to build some altars on the Beas to mark the limits of his advance† and sullenly retrace his steps to the banks of the Jhelum (*Hydaspes*).

Here he took a completely different route from that by which he had come. Coupled with a violent thirst for geographical discovery was the object of establishing a trade route between India and the West that swayed the mind of that great monarch. He therefore sailed down the Jhelum in a fleet constructed out of an ample store of timber which he found on its banks. Some time was spent in conquering certain warlike tribes that lay along his course and after a period of about nine months he reached the country of *Patala* which designated the Delta of the Indus. Here the stream divided into two arms and while sailing down the western arm the Greeks were much alarmed

\* *Arrian's Anabasis* V 25.

† *Ib.* IV 29.

and surprised at a tidal phenomenon.\* The water suddenly receded leaving the ships on dry land, but it rose again the next day and floated the vessels. The old confusion between India and Ethiopia had not yet righted itself and this simple phenomenon of tides, which struck the ignorant Greeks as quite a prodigy, strengthened in Alexander the singular fancy that the Nile and the Indus were the same river.† Proceeding a little towards the south the Macedonians suddenly saw spreading before them the magnificent expanse of the Indian Ocean. Alexander then came up to Patala again and sailed down the eastern arm to see which branch was shorter. On reaching the sea he proposed to employ a small squadron in surveying the coast from that point to the head of the Persian Gulf, while he himself returned to Patala and led back the remaining portion of his army by land across the deserts of Gedrosia (Beluchistan) over to Babylon. The squadron was put under Admiral Nearchus whose celebrated coasting voyage, completed at the end of seven months, was looked upon with pride by Alexander as one of the most extraordinary events of his reign.

***Greek ideas about India as expanded by  
this Expedition.***

It behoves us now to enquire into the additions made by the Macedonian Expedition to the sum total of the ideas then prevailing about India. The information imparted by

\* Arrian, *Anab.*, VI. 19.

† Several curious coincidences served to give colour to this fancy. In the first place the same animals were found in both the rivers, though this argument reminds us of Fluellen's exclamation: "There is a river in Macedon, and there is also, moreover, a river at Monmouth.....there is salmons in both." Secondly, the tidal phenomenon noticed in the Indus was exactly like that of the Nile. Thirdly, inundations of the two rivers were of a similar nature and were followed by similar consequences. Fourthly, the banks of both were inhabited by swarthy men.

Herodotus and Ktesias had stopped at the Indus ; Alexander carried it to the banks of the Sutlej. He had also heard of the rich plains watered by the Ganges, \* but the mutiny in his army prevented him from gaining a personal knowledge of those regions. There is evidence, moreover, to show that rumours of the distant island of Taprobane (Ceylon) with its elephants and cetaceous animals had reached the Greek camp,† though its position, size and shape were not precisely known.

In spite of the charge of mendacity levelled by Strabo against the writers under Alexander, their accounts of the part of the country they actually saw contain many truths some of which can be verified even to-day. In other countries of the world manners and customs may come and go as they like, but in India they go on for ever without any perceptible change. Many of the customs recorded by these ancient writers have successfully withstood the sweeping revolutions of time and continue to this day, while others, though no longer in vogue, are so well known to have belonged to the Hindu society in former times that they need no commentary to explain them. Thus, the asceticism and abstruse philosophy of the Indian gymnosophists, ‡ the self-choosing of husband and wife, the custom of offering virgins as a prize to the victors in wrestling matches, polygamy and the practice of widows burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands§

\* Arrian, *Anab.* V. 25. Alexander's chief informant on this matter was Chandra-Gupta or Sandracottus who afterwards founded the Maurya Dynasty.

† Strabo XV. 15.

‡ Alexander himself was struck by their wisdom and penance. He sent Onesicritus to converse with these "wise men of India." No temptation could induce them to take presents from the conqueror although at last one of the saints, named Kalanos, followed Alexander into Persia where falling ill he sacrificed himself on the funeral pyre. Another characteristic of these religious men attracted the notice of the Greeks. Their frugal and sparing diet and constant fastings created the belief among them that the Indians lived without food. See Elliot, Vol. ii, p. 10, *footnote 1*.

§ Diocl. Sic. XX1, 30.

are among the indisputable facts noticed by these writers about the India of their times. We also learn from them that the country was divided into a number of independent principalities having no feelings in common between them except mutual jealousies. The form of government was monarchical in some and republican and aristocratic in others.\* In the monarchical states kingship was hereditary and the Brahmins were the ministers of the kings and the makers of the laws which were not committed to writing.† Slavery was unknown‡ and the people everywhere enjoyed peace and prosperity. Sober and industrious, characteristically truthful and peaceable, they were good citizens and good farmers while they were remarkable for physical bravery above every other Asiatics. The land was cultivated by families in common and when the crops were gathered in each person took a load for his support during the year. § They are praised for their skill in manufactures and imitations of foreign objects. Nearchus relates that when they saw sponges in use among the Macedonians they exactly copied those things by sewing hairs, thin strings and threads into wool.|| They wrote upon cloth which had been very cleverly woven and well pressed to make it smooth.¶ Curtius says that the tender sides of the barks of trees were used for writing by the Indians at the time of Alexander. " No money was

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\* The republican states referred to by these ancient writers were probably, as Heeren supposes, the genuine ancestors of the Rajputs, Sikhs and Marhattas among whom there was present till comparatively recent times a republican tendency. [See Heeren's *Historical Researches* (Asiatic Nations) Ed. 1816, Vol. II. p 202 sq.]

† Strabo XV. 66.

‡ Arrian's *Indika* c. 10.

§ Strabo XV. 66.

|| *Ib.* 67.

¶ *Ib.*

a Curtius VIII. 9. That this was once the universal practice is borne out by the original significance of such words as *book*, *liber*, *paper*, *code*, *codex*.

either given or taken in marriage\* and the women were remarkable for chastity.

The common people were healthy and lived sparingly, being dressed in white muslin, shod with sandals and having cloths of cotton coiled round the head.† But some had a great fondness for ornaments and gaudy garments interwoven with gold.‡ They hung precious stones as pendants from the ear and decked their wrists and upper arms with bracelets of gold.§ They were also fond of dying their beards and hair which they chose to wear long.||

The study of philosophy and medicine was in great favour among the Brahmans¶ and even women were versed in metaphysics.<sup>a</sup> The Greeks were very favourably impressed with the wisdom of the Indians and we are told what effect was produced on their minds by the well-known answer of the philosopher Dandamis, who said “that he had no need of Alexander whose weapons were powerless against him, since the Brahmans neither loved gold nor feared death.” We also find mention of the Buddhist *Sramans* whom the Greek could not clearly distinguish from the Brahmans, although the two classes are spoken of as antagonistic. In spite of the free mingling of both sexes in the community of these *Sramans*, there was never any violation of the laws of chastity among them. We are told nothing about the religion of the Indians except that they worshipped *Zeus Ombrios*,<sup>b</sup> the Ganges and other deities.

\* Arrian's *Indika* c. 27.

† Curtius VIII. 9.

‡ Strabo XV. 69.

§ Curtius VIII. 9.

|| Strabo XV. 71.

¶ *Ib.* 34.

<sup>a</sup> *Ib.* 66.

<sup>b</sup> “Ombr’os” means: “the raining.” So Zeus Ombrios of the Greeks was Jupiter Pluvius of the Romans and Indra of the Hindus.

The soil was mainly alluvial\* and the inundations of the rivers during the rains greatly increased its fertility. The country was liable to occasional earthquakes and rivers were constantly shifting their course.† These early writers also speak of periodical rains, gold and silver mines, mountains of fossil salt, dogs of rare strength and beauty, and animals of extraordinary size, singing birds and parrots,‡ apes in whom the tendency to imitate was of the keenest, huge banian trees§ under which four hundred horsemen could be sheltered, abundance of medicinal plants and aromatic herbs,|| “reeds producing honey though there be no bees” and so on. The country was rich in precious stones and garnets of every sort and also in pearls, which were often cast upon the shore by the sea.¶ These were ‘the gifts of the sea’ which, as Horace<sup>a</sup> wrote later on, ‘enriched the far distant Indians’.

***The relations of Seleucus with India:—The embassy of Megasthenes.***

These were some of the ideas about India contributed to the world by the Macedonian writers. But it was only a small part of the country that they talked of. If untimely death had not overcome Alexander we have reasons to believe that India would have been more fully explored by the ancient Greeks. That he did not wish his conquests in the East to be merely transient is evident from the fact that he founded several cities in the Punjab and put them under strong garrison when

\* Strabo XV. 71.

† *Ib.* 19.

‡ Arrian's *Indica* c. 15 ; Curtius VIII. 9.

§ Strabo XV. 21.

|| *Ib.* 22.

¶ Curtius VIII. 9.

<sup>a</sup> *Ep. st.* I. 6.

he went away. He had retired from that country with an unsated ambition and in every probability he was thinking of returning once more and bringing the untouched provinces of India under subjection. But death put a period to all his ambitions and the vast dominions which could only have been kept together by his superior genius, fell to pieces at once and was parcelled out among his principal officers. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, held Egypt, Antigonus established himself in Phrygia and Seleucus obtained as his share the province of Babylon which he once lost and reconquered under circumstances which it is not the purpose of this Essay to relate.

Meanwhile the Indian cities of Alexander had wrested themselves out of the Macedonian yoke and passed on into the hands of Chandra Gupta, who afterwards added to his possessions in the Punjab the rich and smiling province of Magadh. Seleucus after assuming royal titles, turned his attention towards the East. He attacked and subjugated the Bactrians and led his army into India.\* He advanced considerably beyond the utmost boundary of Alexander's progress in that country, but it is uncertain whether a battle was fought between him and the king of Magadh. A treaty, however, was made: Chandra Gupta, anticipating the Austrian principle "Let others gain by war but lucky Austria by marriage," accepted the daughter of Seleucus offered to him as his bride and was presented with the provinces east of the Indus in return for only 500 elephants. In order to strengthen the bonds of friendship Seleucus also sent an ambassador to the court of Pataliputra (Palibothra) in the person of the celebrated Megasthenes who was later on succeeded by another ambassador named Daimachus. Megast-

\* *Abo* 305 B. C.—Justin. XV. 4.—*McCordle*.

thenes lived for a considerable time in Behar and was the first European who penetrated into that region and the first writer who gave its account. With commendable energy and diligence he raked up materials which he worked up into his famous book on India (*Ta Indika*), a large portion of which has come down to us in fragments preserved by subsequent writers such as Strabo, Arrian and Diodorus.

### *Megasthenes on India.*

"The knowledge of India derived by Megasthenes includes details which were scarcely known to the Europeans of the last century."\* The city of Palibothra which he locates at the confluence of the Ganges and the Eranoas (Sona)† has been identified with Patna. It was in shape a parallelogram and surrounded by a brick wall and a line of wooden palisades with a ditch in front for the purpose of defence and for receiving the sewage of the city.‡ This magnificent city was connected with the remote regions of the Punjab by a broad and well kept highway called the Royal Road.

The population of India is divided by Megasthenes into seven castes instead of into four. These were the philosophers, husbandmen, shepherds, artisans, soldiers, inspectors and the counsellors of the king. It is evident that these seven classes were obtained by splitting up the four castes into which the Aryans were divided. No one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to exchange one profession or trade for another.§

\* Hunter's *Indian Empire*, p. 169.

† Sansk. *Tirangabaha*, meaning 'the carrier of gold,' a fact mentioned by Megasthenes.

‡ Strabo XV. 36. "The remains of this were brought to light in 1876"—*McCrindle*.

§ 13. 49.



The philosophers were the Brahmins who were employed as priests and whose special duty was to make forecasts of the weather upon which depended the production of crops. They were exempted from payment of taxes if they were correct in their prediction, but otherwise condemned to eternal silence.\* They were mainly vegetarians, did no bodily work but exposed themselves by way of penance to severe bodily sufferings.† The four stages of a Brahmin's life were known to Megasthenes, although in an imperfect way. The husbandmen formed the bulk of the population and were of a very mild disposition. No political revolutions ever disturbed their eternal occupation, no devastating war ever required them to lay down their ploughshares. The whole of the land belonged to the crown and the husbandmen tilled it on receiving as wages only one-fourth of the produce.‡ The artisans had to pay taxes and work at trades. The soldiers received such liberal pay that they maintained others besides themselves and kept servants to attend on them.§ To the counsellors and the assessors of the king belonged the offices of state, the tribunal of justice and the general administration of public affairs. The Inspectors ("Episcopai") were entrusted with the superintendence of all that went on, which they reported privately to the king.|| These Overseers have been identified with the Buddhist Censors of Morals, afterwards referred to in the Fifth Edict of Asoka.¶ But their function seems to have been more like that of spies who are called by Sanskrit writers "the eyes of Kings." The Intelligence Depart-

\* Strabo XV. 39.

† *Ib.* 59.

‡ This is Strabo's account (XV. 40). But Diodorus says that the ryots besides paying a land rent also paid unto the royal treasury the fourth part of the produce.

§ Arrian's *Indica* c. 12.

|| Strabo XV. 13.

¶ The *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*. See Vincent A. Smith's *Asoka* p. 74.

ment was a well-established institution in the Hindu times long before even the birth of Buddhism.

The machinery of administration was organised with much elaboration. Viceröys were sent to the distant provinces and the management of the capital was assigned to a commission of thirty members divided into six boards of five each.\* The first Board was charged with the superintendence of industrial arts, the second with the reception of strangers and with attending to them in case of sickness and want. The third was responsible for the registration of births and deaths, while the fourth was the board of trade. It was occupied with questions of barter and retail, and regulated weights and measures. No one was allowed to deal in a variety of articles unless he paid a double tax : The fifth Board supervised manufactured articles and sold them by public notice, while the sixth was charged with the duty of collecting a tenth part of the prices of all articles sold. Similar to these boards were six other boards directing military affairs.†

The Greek ambassador observed with admiration the absence of slavery,‡ the rarity of theft, the frugal and temperate habits of the people, their orderliness and respect of truth and virtue. National faith was immense and the people had no suits about pledges or deposits. They did not require either seals or witnesses but made their deposits and confided in one another. The penal laws, though seldom required to be exercised, were very severe. A person convicted of bearing false witness suffered a mutilation of his extremes. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" seems to have been literally the maxim of the Penal Code of those days, but he who caused a

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\* Strabo XV. 51.

† *Ib.* 52.

‡ *Ib.* 54.

workman to lose his hand or his eye was put to death.\* Death was also the punishment for the non-payment of the tithe levied on the prices of the articles sold. The people were fond of gaudy dresses and attendants followed them with umbrellas. The favourite mode of exercising the body was by passing smooth ebony rollers over its surface. Polygamy was prevalent and wives were purchased from their parents in exchange for a yoke of oxen.†

Megasthenes also makes certain remarks about the *fauna* and *flora* of the country. He mentions ebony as growing in Bengal and talks of "the royal tiger," of monkeys larger than the largest dogs and capable of rolling down rocks, of large serpents having membranous wings like bats and of winged scorpions of enormous size. Elephant hunts are accurately described and the fable of the gold-digging ants is reproduced as true. He also speaks of "one-horned horses" by which he probably means rhinoceroses.

Our writer did not omit to spice his accounts with a certain flavour of the marvellous. The influence of the floating fictions which had come down the stream of popular tradition was too strong for him to resist, and he speaks about men with ears large enough to sleep in, men without mouth, without nose, with only one eye, with spider legs and with fingers bent backwards.

With the notice of one more thing we shall have done with Megasthenes. He mentions a class of religious ascetics under the name of Germani and distinguishes them from the Brahmans.‡ It has been supposed from this that the Buddhist sect of Sramanas was an instituted order long before the time of Asoka. But, as scholars have pointed out, the Germani may very well answer to

\* Strabo XV. 54.

† *Ib.*

‡ Strabo XV. 59-60.

the Brahmans in the first and third stages of their life. It may be generally noticed in this connexion that almost all the Greek writers fell into hopeless confusion with regard to the Buddhists, the Brahmins and the monastic orders.

*Greek knowledge about India after Megasthenes.*

So much as regards Megasthenes. After him down to the end of the pre-Christian Era no additions were practically made to the world's knowledge about India. Daimachus who, as we learn from Strabo, was sent to the court of Chandragupta's son, is said to have written a book on India. But all traces of it have now totally disappeared. The meagre accounts left by Patroclus, Eratosthenes, Polybius and others do not give us more definite knowledge than what we have already learnt from the Macedonian writers. Eratosthenes was singularly in the wrong as regards the configuration of India, which he took to be rhomboidal and Polybius (*cir.* 144 B. C.) mentions an invasion of India about 212 B. C. by Antiochus the Great and his conclusion of peace with an Indian prince named Sophagasenus.\* The intercourse of the Syrian court with India had by this time completely died out, although Greek influence still continued to be shed upon it from the quarter of Bactria. It would be foreign to our purpose to pursue the fortunes of this state in any detail, but it is necessary to remember that Bactria had thrown off its allegiance to Syria about sixty years after Alexander's death and that each of the six Bactrian kings carried on military operations with India. They are said to have conquered a larger portion of that country than what was subjected to Alexander. Various were the influences which the contiguity of his

\* Pol. XI. 34—*McCrindle*.

little state had upon India until it was itself overthrown by hordes of Scythians or *Sakai* about 126 B. C.

From this time forward until the arrival of the Portuguese, not conquest but commerce continued to attract the attention of Europe to India. It was that alone more than anything else that bound together the East and the West.

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***Intercourse of Egypt with India under  
the Ptolemies.***

The seat of this renewed commerce was at first located at Alexandria. With its 'countless masts and noisy quays, its motley crowd of foreigners and hubbub of all dialects from India to Cadiz, its vast piles of merchandise lying unsheltered in that rainless air,'\* Alexandria soon arose to be a mart of the world and successfully held its superiority for several centuries to come. When Ptolemy the First got Egypt as his share, he made that city the seat of government. As he had been in India with Alexander it is more than possible that he was fully aware of the advantages of a commercial intercourse with that opulent country, and that in order to secure them he gave attention to naval affairs. But he could not proceed further than building the famous lighthouse at Pharos on the mouth of the bay of Alexandria which was dangerous of navigation. With regard to his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, we know that great impulse was given in his reign to Indian commerce. He sent an embassy headed by one Dionysos to the court of Pataliputra, evidently for the purpose of opening up a commerce with India. He kept a well-equipped navy in the Arabian Gulf or the Red Sea and founded two seaports, Berenice and Myos Hormos, on the Egyptian coast. In order

to facilitate the transport of goods he set about constructing a canal joining the Nile with the Red Sea, which for some reason or other was never completed. This however did not cause any great inconvenience. Ships trading with India arrived at Myos Hormos\* from whence the goods were brought on camels on the twelfth day to Coptus, a city on a canal of the Nile, and thence, conveyed by water in another twelve days to Alexandria. The caravan across the desert travelled only by night on account of heat and there were places of rest on the road.† The sea-borne trade thus continued for a long time to be carried along the coast from Berenice, round the south coast of Arabia and of Persia to the mouth of the Indus.

*The overland routes of commerce.*

But Egypt was not the only consumer of Indian goods and besides this sea route along the Arabian Gulf, the congested commerce of India was relieved by at least three other outlets. One ran across Central Asia along the Oxus by which commodities were carried to the shores of the Caspian and the Black Sea. The second also was by land and lay through the heart of Persia over to the neck of Asia Minor, while the third was by way of the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates through Damascus and Tadmor to the ports of the Levant.

As regards the trade along Tadmor,‡ or Palmyra, it was a very ancient one and its importance is shown by the corresponding opulence to which that city arose. From its

\* Gradually however the concourse of trade was drawn away from Myos Hormos to Berenice, as we learn from Pliny. See Vincent's *Periplus* Vol. I. p. 80.

† Pliny's *N. H.* VI. 23. Vincent does not believe that there was any direct trade between Egypt and India during the days of the Ptolemies, but there is no reason for our nodding assent to that great authority in the present case.

‡ The city was named Thadamor by Solomon but the Greeks called it Palmyra for its being surrounded by palm trees.

beautiful situation and being the only green spot in a vast and weary desert, Tadmor attained to importance in the days of Solomon who was its founder,\* and the period of her opulence lasted for ages down to its conquest by Aurelian. It must, however, be remembered that this trade was for a time checked in its course to the Levant by the rise of the Parthian Empire and its frequent wars with Rome.† It was finally reopened in the days of the Roman Empire.‡ The articles that were brought along this route must have been of small bulk which could bear the expense of a land carriage. The Black sea trade was also an early one and long afterwards rose very high under the Byzantine Emperors. It exists even to-day supplying as it does the northern tribes with the luxuries of India. Owing however to the insecurity of these land trades the greatest influx of commodities was by the sea.§

Such continued the state of Indian commerce down to the Roman occupation of Syria and Egypt, which practically brings us to the end of the first period of our enquiry. Before, however, we quit it, we shall dwell briefly on one or two other points of contact between India and the West before the Christian Era.

### *Indian immigrations to the West.*

In spite of the express assertion of some ancient

\* *I Kings* IX. 18 ; *II. Chron.* VIII. 4.

† Heeren supposes that the Persian Gulf was closed to the Indian trade in the time of the Parthian Empire, the articles being then conveyed along the Arabian Gulf to Myos Hormos and thence overland to Palmyra. *Hist. Res. (Asiatics)* Vol. II p. 409.

‡ Appian, *De Bell. Cir.* V. 9. (McCrindle.) Horace also refers to some of these routes in the following line : "With speed as a merchant you run to the ends of India, flying from poverty through sea, through rocks, through flames." *Ep. I. 45.* —Lonsdale and Lee's Transl.

§ The trade routes indicated above were only a few out of the many that covered Asia like a network. For a detailed and accurate description of them see Heeren's *Hist. Researches (Asiatics)* Vol. II, Appendices IX and XIII.

writers that the Indians never sent out of their country any armies or colonies, modern scholarship has convinced all but the most obstinately sceptical that emigrations of expatriated Indians took place in very early times and towards the west.\* It is not necessary to tread with Pococke on the dangerous and justly disputable ground of trying to prove that Greece itself was an Indian colony ; but if we only cast our eyes to the north-eastern shores of the Euxine we shall find there traces of Indian occupancy.† It was probably from this region that the Indian merchants had sailed who were shipwrecked in the Baltic ;‡ for it was hardly possible for them to have been carried round from India direct to the north of Europe by a current of the ocean ;—an argument which was emphatically put forward in the discussions about the possibility of a North-West passage to India, as recorded in Hakluyt's *Voyages*.

In the next place we have reasons for believing that Indian mercenaries served in the ranks of European armies, finding as we do the evidence of an Indian cavalry being stationed at Cirencester during the Roman occupation of Britain.§

Itinerant Hindu *sannyasis* also used to travel over a large part of the world that was known to them, converting distant shrines, like the fire temple at Baku, into places of Hindu pilgrimage. Again, when Alexandria rose in importance as the great emporium of the Eastern trade, it came to be frequented by Indian merchants some of whom actually settled in that place.

\* Elliot's *History I.* Appendix, p. 507 Sq.

† *Ib.* p. 510 sq.

‡ Pliny's *N. H.* ii. 67.

§ Wright's *Celt. Roman and Saxon* p. 252, quoted in Elliot, Vol. I, Appendix 466.



***Buddhist Missionaries to the West.***

Finally there is a consilience of evidence to show that Buddhism was preached in Palestine long before the time of Jesus Christ. The spirit of that religion was the spirit of proselytism and Buddhist missionaries from the very beginning went from place to place preaching the new Gospel. We learn from the Edicts of Asoka that he sent missionaries to the dominions of the Seleucides and the Ptolemies before the end of the 3rd century B. C. The "Essenes" of Palestine presenting such a striking similarity to Buddhist monks, had been established on the shores of the Dead Sea for "thousands of ages" before the time of Pliny. \* This shows the great antiquity of the sect, although, as Mr. King says, † the "thousands of ages" of the great Naturalist must be admitted as one of his favourite literary tropes. It was Buddhism again that later on influenced the Gnostic heresies which rent the Early Church and caused the rise of those classes whom Kingsley in his seething Christian zeal calls "a strange brood of theoretic monsters begotten by effete Greek philosophy upon Egyptian symbolism, Chaldee astrology, Parsee dualism and Brahmanic spiritualism." ‡

All these emigrations no doubt helped to a certain extent the dissemination of ideas about India over the Western world.

***Greek knowledge about Indian Medicine and Philosophy.***

There were other points of contact between India and Europe among which a large part was played by science

\* *N. H.* V, 15.

† C. W. King's *Gnostics and their Remains*. 2nd Ed. 1887, p. 52.

‡ *Hypatia*, *Preface*, p. xiii.

and philosophy. *Ex oriente lux*; and contrary to the present state of affairs India was for a long time the teacher of Europe both directly and indirectly in medicine, mathematics, philosophy and other branches of human knowledge. We shall at present confine ourselves as much as possible to the pre-Christain era of this teachership and direct our attention to medicine and philosophy. It has been already pointed out that the Macedonian writers under Alexander described India as the home of medicinal and aromatic herbs and referred to the attention paid by the Brahmins to medicine and philosophy. This science of Indian medicine had a large influence on the Greek system of the healing art. Long before the time of Alexander we find in the works of Hippocrates, "the father of medicine" and a contemporary of Ktesias, traces of a distinct influence of the Indian pharmacopœia. Thus for instance he prescribes the two kinds of pepper, long and round, for nearly the same maladies for which they are still used by the Indian *kavirajas* \*. It is not possible that Hippocrates came to India but he undoubtedly got his ideas about Indian medicine in Persia between which and India on the one hand and Greece on the other, a direct intercourse subsisted for a long time. If we might somewhat anticipate the course of events, it might in the next place be pointed out that Dioscorides, the most copious writer on *Materia Medica* of the ancients (1st cent. A.D.), mentioned several Indian plants among which was the *Calamus Aromaticus*, (Lemon grass), thought to be identical with the scriptural 'sweet cane' and 'the rich aromatic reed brought from a far country.' A little later on we find that Aetius, an Alexandrine writer on surgery of the fifth century, had some acquaintance with the medicines, diseases and prac-

tices of India. A consideration of the influence of Indian medical science on the European through the medium of the Arabs is reserved for a later chapter of this treatise.

As in medicine so in philosophy and metaphysics, the mind of Europe is still working on the materials furnished by India. It has been thought highly possible that "so long as philosophy was cultivated in Greece, India was often regarded as the ultimate and purest source of the 'True Wisdom', the knowledge of things divine. Even as late as Lucian's time, the middle of the second century, that author concludes his evidently true history of Antiphris and Demetrius by making the latter, a Cynic philosopher by profession, resign all his property to his friend and depart for India, there to end his life amongst the Brahmins".\* The close analogy between some systems of philosophy in India and some in Greece has been already referred to. Looking beyond our prescribed pale of time, we may also point to the analogies between the Neo-Platonist doctrines and the tenets of the Sankhya system. Both Plotinus (201-269 A. D.) and his celebrated pupil Porphyry† evince strong proofs of their being influenced by the Indian school of philosophy mentioned above.‡ Porphyry also speaks eloquently and with sympathetic

\* *Toxaris* 34, quoted by Mr. C. W. King in his *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 54.

† Porphyry owes the name by which he is so well-known to the fashion of translating foreign designations which was common in that age. His native Semetic name Malchus (*i.e.* *Melch*, a king) was changed into "Basileus" and Longinus subsequently turned this substantive into the adjective, Porphyrius (*i.e.* clad in purple or royal robes).—Donaldson, quoted by Dr. Ward in his edition of Green's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. This rage for translating names characterised even the days of Erasmus whose own appellation, Desiderius Erasmus, is made up of the Latin and Greek equivalents of his original Dutch name, Gheeraerd (*i.e.*, desired or beloved).

‡ Macdonell's *H. of Sansk. Lit.* p. 421.

admiration of the austerities and high moral principles actuating the Brahmins \*.

## II. European\* Intercourse with and Accounts of India *about and after the Christian Era.*

### *Roman trade with India.*

The intercourse between Europe and India entered upon a new era with the Roman conquest of Egypt which was made about forty-seven years before the birth of Christ. The Romans were not distinguished as a commercial nation and had never before gone into trade and commerce ; but this did not prevent them from acquiring a taste for oriental luxuries. Rome was now practically the mistress of the western world and made her subject nations contribute to the gratification of her desires as far as they could. Under the security and protection offered by the vigilance of the Roman Magistrates, the merchants of Syria and Egypt vied with each other in scattering over the Empire the rich and voluptuous products of the East.

### *The discovery of the monsoons and its effect on the Roman trade with the East.*

Under the Consulate Indian commodities rarely found their way into Rome but during the first years of the Empire the Western trade with India attained new vigour and was carried to a much greater extent than before. There began in Rome an almost unrestrained indulgence in Eastern luxuries that caused many of the sober-minded citizens to lift up their voices against it. Pliny, for instance, laments the wasteful extravagance of the richer classes in perfumes, unguents, and personal ornaments and

\* Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal food.*      McCrindle,

estimates the annual drain from the Empire at 100,000,000 sesterii (about £885,416)—“so dearly do we pay for luxury or our women.”\* Such continued the state of commerce until the death of Nero during whose reign it reached its high-water mark.

This increase in trade was all the more helped by a very lucky discovery. As has been said already the voyage to India in those days was only a coasting one and subject to great inconveniences. The time taken to complete it was considerable and the route was infested with pirates who attacked vessels hugging the coast. These and other disadvantages were to a very great extent removed by the discovery of the monsoons in the Indian Ocean. The Egyptian pilots by their frequent outings on that sea could not fail to observe the periodical winds that blow continually from the East during one-half of the year and from the opposite quarter during the other half. This periodicity of the wind was now sought to be turned to the advantage of commerce. Accordingly about eighty years after the Roman conquest of Egypt a navigator named Hippalus boldly sailed across that ocean and was carried in forty days by the south-west monsoon to the nearest Indian seaport of Muziris on the Malabar coast. The importance of the discovery was so felt that the wind itself was named after the discoverer.† Navigation was thus simplified to a great extent and intercourse with India came to be of a more frequent nature. Ships used to take their departure from Berenice about midsummer and in thirty days reached the mouth of the Arabian Gulf. Thence with the help of the wind they could sail to Muziris in forty days. Muziris however was not a desirable place of call on account of the swarms of pirates living in the neighbourhood. The sea

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\* N. E., XII, 18.

† Plin., N. H., II, 23; *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, (Vincent). Vol. ii p. 424.

below it was also full of shallows and hence ships were obliged to anchor at a great distance from the shore, cargoes being landed by native boats. Companies of archers were carried on their board in fear of the pirates. In the days of Pliny, Roman galleys used to visit another important harbour called Bacare near which were the dominions ruled by *Pandion* (one of Pandya Kings of Southern India) with his capital at Madura. The voyage homeward was begun in December; and thus the whole journey was completed with the help of the monsoons in less than a year.

Discoveries in Indian numismatology have proved to some extent the nature and locale of this Roman trade with India. There have been great finds of Roman coins in and near the Coimbatore District and at Madura. This was the part of the country that supplied Rome with spices, pepper, perfumes, ivory, fine muslins, and precious stones among which the beryl has been specially mentioned by both Ptolemy \* and Pliny. †

### *The articles of this Roman trade with India.*

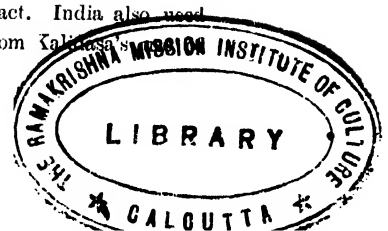
The demand for silks and perfumes at Rome was somewhat abnormal. Every one used them. The silk that came to Rome came mostly from China through India. ‡ Virgil mentions the soft wool that was combed from the trees of the Seres or Chinese. § Silk threads were often taken away into the west where it was woven into dress. It is not impossible, as Sir George Birdwood suggests, that the celebrated Coan silk came originally

\* McCrindle's *Ptolemy* p. 181.

† *N. H.* X<sup>th</sup> XVII. 5.

‡ The Latin name for silk, *sericum*, points to the same fact. India also used to get her silk mostly from the same country as may be seen from Kalidasa's use of the word *Chināmsukam* for a kind of very fine silk cloth.

§ *George ii.* 121.



from India. It was so transparent that the form and colour of the body could be distinctly seen through a vest made of it, as is represented in a well-known *al fresco* painting at Pompeii of a dancing girl. Julius Cæsar displayed a great profusion of silk stuffs in some of the magnificent theatrical spectacles with which he used to entertain the people of Rome. Transparent silk garments became the common dress of the aristocratic classes and so indecent became the effect thereof that Tiberius Cæsar had to make a law that no man should disgrace himself by wearing silk ; and Pliny condemned the thirst of gain which explored the last confines of the earth for the pernicious purpose of exposing to the public eye naked draperies and transparent matrons\*. Silk was sometimes priced at its weight in gold, a pound of silk being sold in the time of Aurelian for twelve ounces of that precious metal. † The use of perfumes also ran very high, causing a great drain of money from the Empire. Attempts were sometimes made to restrain this waste by forbidding the sale of foreign perfumes in Rome but these edicts only made them more expensive. Houses, furniture and dresses were perfumed ; the amphitheatres and baths were scented with essences and on certain feast days even the military ensigns were anointed. The burning of incense was very common even at funerals. All these perfumes and incense came partly from India and partly from Arabia, but the Indian kind was always given the preference. The demand for precious stones and gems, especially diamond and pearl, was not less keen. The best kinds of these gems came from India and Roman ladies were actually mad after them, as Pliny tells us.

\* Gibbon, XL. iii.

† *Ib.*

## European Accounts of India during the Roman Ascendency.

### (a) *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea.*

For a contemporary account of the course of this sea-borne trade and the cargoes sent out and brought home we are indebted to the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, a curious and important treatise apparently written by an experienced practical sailor. This treatise has been referred to the first century A. D. by Müller and other scholars of note. A *Periplus* was a sort of 'marine guide book' describing trade routes, great emporia of trade, and the articles of commodity found in them. It has a sort of modern equivalent in the "Guide books" for travellers. This particular *Periplus* is divided into two parts, the first part comprehending the coast of Africa from Myos Hormos to Rhapta on the mouth of the Red Sea, the other passing from that point over to Guzerat and running down the Malabar coast to Ceylon.

In due time the navigators reached the mouths of the Scynthus (Indus) which was the greatest river that fell into the Indian Ocean. All but one of the seven mouths were shallow and narrow, not fit for large vessels to ascend.\* Situated on the middle mouth of the Indus was the emporium of Barbarike where ships were unloaded and re-cargoed. The commerce appears to have been very considerable consisting in the exchange of silk threads, bedellium (a kind of gum), spikenard and sapphires, indigo, cottons,† emeralds and costus (a spice), for cloth, coral, vessels of glass, money, wine, frankincense and

\* Vincent's *Periplus* Vol. II p. 350.

† The Greek name for cotton fabrics, *sindeon*, indicates the land of their manufacture.



topazes.\* After passing by the tempestuous Gulf of Eirionon (Cutch), which was very dangerous of navigation, the merchantmen came to the coast of Syrastrênê (Surashtra *i.e.* Guzerat) which was very fertile in grains and cotton. The *Periplus* praises that province for the superior stature of its inhabitants.† Turning a promontory the vessels reached a third gulf which was named after Barygaza,‡ a city situated about thirty miles from the sea on the north side of the Narnadios (Narmada). Barygaza was the chief emporium of Western India. The mouth of the river could not be found without difficulty owing to the flat shore and the numerous shoals, and its navigation was very difficult in consequence of violent and frequent bores. The object of the traders was to come to Barygaza in the month of July when a great fair was held in that city. The articles that were imported into it were brass, tin, lead, sashes, white-glass, black lead, gold and silver coins, wines, topazes, corals and perfumes in small quantity. The articles of export were onyx stones which were chiefly brought down from Ougein (Ujjain), a great city and the capital of an extensive kingdom, porcelain, fine muslins, cottons in large quantity, spikenard, perfumes, ivory, ebony, myrrh, silk, pepper§ and precious stones like diamond. The *Periplus* also says that the coins of the Bactrian kings, Menander and Apollodotus, were met with at that place.||

Beyond Barygaza the country extended south and was called Dakinabades (*Dâkshinâtya* or the

\* Vincent' *Periplus* II. p. 352.

† *Ib.* p. 356.

‡ Modern *Bharouch*. The name *Barygaza* is probably a corruption of the Sanskrit *Bhṛigukachekha* or *Bhṛigukshetra*—Wilson quoted in McCrindle's *Ptolemy*.

§ Some of the Indian exports retained their native names in Greek and Latin : thus *karpasus* and *saccharus* from *karpasa* ; *sacchar* and *saccharon* from *sarkara* ; *peperi* and *piper* from *pippali* and so on.—See Cowell's note ; Elphinstone (7th Edn.) p. 187.

|| Vincent's *Periplus*, II. pp. 363-5.

Deccan). It consisted of regions of vast extent, mountains and deserts filled with wild animals. In the interior were two great capitals, Plithana\* and Tagara.† From these marts goods were transported on waggons to Barygaza, Plithana sending great quantities of onyx stones and Tagara supplying common cotton-cloth, muslin and other articles.‡ The coast extending southward from the Gulf of Barygaza presented several ports among which Kalliena corresponds to modern Kalyan opposite to Bombay. The sea-coast was infested with pirates whose chief haunt was the Kheronesus or the peninsula near Goa. Further to the south were the three great emporia of Tyndis, Musiris, and Nelkynda. Musiris was at the height of its prosperity from the Hellenic ships coming from Egypt. This place imported great quantities of pepper, betel, and other commodities. Nelkynda was at some distance from the sea and situated on a river which fell into the sea below the town of Bakare. The river was difficult of navigation and ships were obliged to sail down empty from Nelkynda to Bakare and there take in their cargoes. The exports were chiefly pepper, fine silks, pearl, ivory, tortoise-shells and precious stones such as diamonds, rubies and amethysts.§ The “Red-Hill” placed near it in the *Periplus* is the bar of red laterite which at a short distance south of Quilon cuts short the Backwater navigation and is still known to sea-men as “the Red Cliff.”||

Beyond this point there is reason to believe that the navigation of the Roman seamen was not carried further.

\* This is evidently a slip for Paithana which was easily made, being a Λ in the place of an Α. Paithana, the Paithan of the present day, is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit Pratisthana, the famous capital of Salivahan. It is a town near modern Hyderabad on the left-bank of the river Godavari.

† Tagara has not yet been properly identified.

‡ Vincent's *Periplus*. II p 373.

§ *Ib.* 415.

|| Yule quoted by McCrindle.

What they learnt of the other coast was more from hearsay than from personal experience. The city mentioned next is Colchos, in the sea below which pearl-fishery was carried on. Then comes Comar, a town evidently adjoining the southernmost point of India where there was a convent for persons of both sexes, who professed celibacy.\* Ceylon is next described under the name of Palesimonda to which island however our author never went. What he knew of it was only from report and he most prudently does not venture beyond the scanty notice that the island abounded in pearls and precious stones, fine linens and tortoise shells.

Our author then goes over to the Coromandel coast which he describes in a vague and imperfect way. A part of it was known as Masalia which was the seaboard of a country extending far inland and noted for the manufacture of very fine cloths. Mention is also made of an inland city in the south, which was called Argalan and which was celebrated for its manufacture of muslins adorned with small pearls. Then comes a land of terrors and prodigies indicating undoubtedly the farthest limit of Greek and Roman knowledge of the east coast of India. Reference however is made to the Gangetic Delta where there was a great commercial mart called by the name of the river. Its trade consisted in cloths of the most delicate texture and extreme beauty under which description we probably recognise the muslins of Dacca. This "Gangetic mart" mentioned also by Ptolemy has been identified by some with Chittagong, by others with the site of the ancient Hindu capital of Banga which lay in the neighbourhood of Sonargaon, by others again with Jessore, while by a fourth set of writers it has been brought near Chinsura. Beyond the Ganges was "the golden country," the Aurea Chersonesus of Ptolemy.

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\* Vincent's *Periplus* II p. 441.

*(b) Strabo.*

The writer next in point of time was Strabo. His Geography is, as McCrindle says, the most comprehensive work on that science which has come down to us from the ancient world. He lived in the reign of Augustus and was a great traveller, though he never came to India. He talks of the entire world, as the world was known at the time, and necessarily the Indian account is a part of the whole thing. It is he who has preserved for us great portions of the ancient writers about this country and from him we get a tolerable idea of the extent to which Indian commerce had risen in his time. He says for instance that about 120 ships sailed in his day from Myos Hormos to India\* and he also speaks of the Black Sea trade.† But his knowledge about the eastern parts of India was very meagre, as is evident from his statement that the Ganges entered the sea by only one mouth. Strabo tells us of an embassy sent from India to Augustus. The letter was written in Greek and on parchment. It came from a king named Poros who was desirous of becoming Caesar's friend and willing to grant him a passage wherever he wished through his dominions. At the head of this embassy was an Indian named Zarmano-chegas,‡ a native of Bargosa (Barygaza or Bharoach), who burnt himself at Athens.§

*(c) Pliny.*

The next writer to whom we are indebted for references to India was the Elder Pliny whose Natural History is too well known to need an introduction.

\* Strabo I. v. 12.

† *Ib.* XI. vii. 3.

‡ Sramanacharyya. This shows that he was a Buddhist monk. Sir Thomas Browne refers to him in his *Hydriotaphia*.

§ Strabo XV. 73.

With a rare thirst after knowledge, which afterwards even cost him his life, that celebrated man gathered together all previous accounts of India and added on to them the discoveries made in his own time. His Natural History is a perfect Encyclopædia of ancient knowledge on a variety of subjects and contains numerous references to India some of which are of unique value. But oddly enough the great Naturalist was not above the unscientific absurdities current about that country and even in his hands India became the *locus fabulosos* of which Scylax and Ktesias had told such wonderful tales.

### *Pliny on Ceylon.*

Pliny was the first to give a systematic account of the island of Taprobane.\* We learn from him that this island was long regarded as another world by the ancient Greeks and it hence went by the appellation "Antichthonēs." At the time of Alexander the Great it became clear that it was an island. Megasthenes recorded that it was divided by a river and that it was more productive of gold and pearls than India itself.† It was thought to be twenty days' sail from the country of the Prasii but the distance came to be reckoned at a seven days' sail. The sea between that island and India was full of shallows. The sailors of the island did not direct their vessels like the Greek and the Phœnician mariners by observation of the stars. But they took birds out to sea with them which they let loose from time to time and followed the direction of their flight as they made for land.

\* *N. H.* VI. 22. "Onesicritus is recorded as the first European author who mentions Ceylon under this name" (Heeren).

† The richness of the island in mineral wealth is evident from its "ancient Sanskrit name, *Ratnadvipa*, 'the Island of Gems' and it is termed by an Arab historian of the 9th century *Taxirat al Yakut*, "The Isle of Rubies." See Yule's *Marco Polo*, II p. 314 and Elliot vol. I. p. 118.

To this *résumé* given by Pliny of European ideas Ceylon before his time we may add the account of Ceylon to be gathered from the story of the alleged voyage of Iamboulos to the island. The story as recorded by Diodorus, a contemporary of Pliny, relates how in trading to Arabia for spices Iamboulos was taken prisoner by some Ethiopians who committed him in a vessel to the mercy of the waves, and how he was eventually cast upon the shores of Ceylon. There he stayed for seven years at the end of which he was ejected as a vile fellow. Accordingly sailing away from Ceylon up the bay of Bengal, Iamboulos arrived at the mouth of the Ganges. He thence went by river to Pataliputra whose king was friendly to the Greeks and with whose help Iamboulos was at last able to come back to Greece. The principal facts mentioned by Iamboulos with regard to Ceylon are (i) the stature of the natives and the flexibility of their joints, (ii) the length of their ears, bored and pendent ; (iii) the perpetual verdure of the trees ; (iv) the attachment of the natives to astronomy ; (v) their worship of the elements, and particularly the sun and the moon ; (vi) their cotton garments ; (vii) the prevalence of polyandry and (viii) the equality of day and night. But although Iamboulos professed to have stayed in Ceylon for seven whole years, he most strangely did not know that cinnamon was a product of the island. This little circumstance is enough to throw an air of suspicion on his whole story.\*

To these ideas Pliny added the discoveries made in his time about that island. In the reign of the Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.) a freedman of a Roman citizen while sailing around Arabia was carried by storm to a port of Taprobane where he was humanely received

\* See Vincents' *Periplus*, Preliminary Disq. pp. 20-24 ; McCrindle's *India as described by Classical Authors*, pp. 204-5.

by the king of the island. The king when he heard of the opulence and power of the Roman Empire was desirous of making friends with Claudius and sent an embassy to Rome under the guidance of that freedman. This fact served to augment the knowledge of the Romans about Taprobane. They learnt that it was a land rich in gold and silver, in pearls and precious stones. There were no slaves in the island, no courts of law and consequently there was no litigation. The king was chosen by the people and had thirty counsellors. None of these counsellors could be condemned to death except by the vote of the majority ; the person so condemned had of course the right of appeal to the people. The king, if he gave any offence to his subjects, was condemned to eternal disrespect and no one talked with him or looked at him.

The people were very fond of hunting and fishing. The nearest part of India was a promontory named Coliachum, a four days' sail from that island. There was a big lake in the interior of the island from which sprang two rivers watering the whole country.

### *Pliny on India.*

Writing of India proper, Pliny remarks the great number of kingdoms into which it was divided and says that to attempt to reckon them exactly would be like to attempt to enumerate its mountains.\* He gives a vivid account of the voyages that were taken to India in his time and then deviates into fables. The country produced the largest of animals and the biggest of trees and plants, the very reeds being of so prodigious a length that a section between two nodes could make a tolerable canoe for three men. Among the mountains in the east of India was the land of satyrs, while in other places were men with

\* *N. H.* VI. 17.

ears covering them all over. There were yet another people among whom women conceived at five years of age and did not live beyond their eighth year.\* He speaks of an animal called the monoceros which had the head of a stag, the feet of an elephant and the tail of a boar, while the rest of its body was like that of a horse.† There were to be found in the Ganges phenomenal lobsters of four cubits and eels even as long as three hundred feet.‡

Pliny gives a long list of Indian plants and trees and enumerates in great detail the minerals and precious stones of the country. He mentions ebony as being peculiar to India§ and speaks of *indicum* or indigo with whose composition however he was totally unacquainted.|| He talks of pepper and ginger as growing wild in this country and of the great demand there was of them in Rome.¶ Indian minerals and precious stones were the best in the world, diamond and pearls, beryl and opal, onyx and jasper, amethyst and carbuncle being held in great esteem by the Romans.<sup>a</sup> To India pre-eminently was due the glory of being the great producer of the most costly gems.<sup>b</sup>

#### (d) *Aelian's Indian Zoology.*

Before going on to Ptolemy whose Geography was destined to govern the world's ideas on that subject for several centuries, we must mention Aelian whose works on Zoology have noticed not a few of Indian animals. Aelian lived in the middle of the second century of the

\* N. II. VII. 2.

† Ib. VIII. 31.

‡ Ib. IX. 2.

§ Ib. XII. 4.

|| Ib. XXXV. 6.

¶ Ib. XII. 7.

<sup>a</sup> Ib. XXXVII. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. 6.



Christian Era. Besides speaking of Indian apes and dogs, tigers and elephants, sheep and goats, winged scorpions and snakes, parrots and cocks and various other animals he says that gladiatorial fights were not uncommon in India. But the fights were always between men and men and between animals and animals. Interspersed with these accounts are certain other information regarding the natural features of the country. The Ganges he speaks of as having no tributary streams at the source, but it was augmented in its progress by the waters of other rivers. There were islands in it larger than Lesbos and Kyrnos.\*

(c) *Ptolemy.*

We now come to Ptolemy (2nd cent. A.D.) who first raised Geography to a scientific basis and connected it with astronomical observations and mathematical calculations. His work was considered of paramount authority for a good many centuries and his decisions were considered as ultimate with regard to Geography, as the decisions of Aristotle with regard to Philosophy. The revival of the study of Ptolemy's work during the Renaissance exercised a great influence on the progress of Geographical discoveries and fostered the belief in Columbus and others that it was possible to reach India by direct navigation towards the west.

Ptolemy was a native of Alexandria and thus his information about India was in most cases derived from the journals of trading vessels and the oral accounts of merchants. He had also availed himself of the information imparted by one Marinus of Tyre, a writer on Geography, who lived shortly before Ptolemy and who is known to us only through that writer. As expected there-

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\* Aelian, *On the Peculiarities of Animals*, III. xli, McCrindle.

fore, Ptolemy's notice of India is partly right and partly wrong. His work is purely geographical and whatever information on points of history we obtain from it is more from inference than from direct statement.

He divides the whole Indian continent into two parts, viz., *India intra Gangem* and *India extra Gangem*, the former extending westward from the Ganges and including some portions of the modern Afganistan and Beluchistan; the latter stretching eastward from the river and embracing all south-eastern Asia as far as the country of the Sinai (China). He describes the whole sea coast from the mouths of the Indus to those of the Ganges and goes along the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal as far onward as the Gulf of Siam, giving a list of the most important towns with the latitude and longitude of each.

Beginning with an enumeration of the seven mouths of the Indus, Ptolemy goes on to Syrastra (Surat), a village, and Monoglosson (Mangrol), a mart in the peninsula of Guzerat. Passing by the Gulf of Barygaza and the mouth of the Namados (Narmada) which river was difficult of navigation owing to frequent bores, he arrives at Ariaké which corresponds nearly to Maharashtra, the country of the Marhattas. There he mentions two towns which have been made by modern scholars the pegs on which to hang some peculiar theories. The first is Soupára which it has been sought to identify with some show of reason with Solomon's Ophir; and the second was Byzantein,\* the close correspondence of whose name with that of the famous city on the Bosporos, has led to the surmise that a Greek colony had been established on the west coast of India. A few more towns precede Muziris, the great sea-port mentioned by Pliny, below which was Bakarei, another

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\* The name is in all probability a corruption of Sanskrit *Vijayanta*, modern Vijaydanga, the south entrance of the Vaghtan river in Ratnagiri—McCrindle.

great emporium of Indian trade. Ptolemy then comes to Comar (Comorin) which he calls both a cape and a town. Here, however, he falls into an egregious error. He places Cape Comorin a little below the latitude of Bombay and practically blots the peninsula out of existence by making it take a sharp turn to the east at that place. He then passes on to the Kolkhoic Gulf (Gulf of Manar) on which he places Kolkhoi (Coel), an emporium of pearl trade. After mentioning Cape Cory\* he passes on to the east coast where he notices the mouth of the Khaberos (Kaveri). A little to the north was the sea-board of Maisolia (Maslipatum), which was noted for the manufacture of the finer kinds of cotton fabric. He then arrives on the Orissa coast and describes four rivers as watering this part of the country of which the Manada (Mahanadi) was one. Among the places he enumerates we recognise the modern Konarak in his Konnagara. Next comes the mouth the Gangetic Delta which Ptolemy was the first to describe definitely. Prior to him European ideas about this part were of the vaguest sort. Virgil had spoken of 'the deep Ganges rising silently with its seven majestic streams'† and Strabo was not aware that it entered the sea by more than one mouth. Ptolemy gives the number of its mouths as five, but it is difficult to identify them to-day as the Ganges has greatly altered the hydrography of its delta. The westernmost mouth, the Kambyson, has by some been identified with the Hughli and by others with the Subarnarekha which might have been mistaken for a branch of the Ganges. In connexion with the river mouths Ptolemy mentions two towns viz., Poloura and

\* This was the most important projection of India towards the south. The curvature of the gulf near it was called by the Hindus *Itama-dhanuk* or Rama's bow, each end of the bow being called *koti* (or "end") which became in Tamil *kori*. It is remarkable that the Portuguese without knowing anything of the *kori* of the Greeks called the same spot of land Cape Ramancoru—McCrindle, p. 61.

† *Aeneid*. ix. 36.

Tilogramon, the former being placed by some near Jelasor and the latter near Jessore.

Having thus described the seacoast of India Ptolemy gives a list of its mountain ranges together with the rivers that issue from them. We need not go into any details over the matter, but it may be interesting to learn that he was the only geographer of classical antiquity in whose writings indigenous name of the Vindhya Range is to be found (Mt. Ouindion). His Mt. Sardonyx has been identified with the Satpura hills in which there are mines of the carnelian stone of which the sardonyx is a species. Ptolemy's description of the Ganges is meagre in comparison with that of the Indus. Among its many tributaries, the Diamouna (Jamuna) is deservedly given a prominent place. He then traces the devarications of the Ganges and enumerates its five mouths. After mentioning several other rivers, such as the Namados (Narmada) and the Mophis (Mahi), Ptolemy proceeds to give a list of the different territories and peoples of India classified according to the river basins, together with the towns belonging to each territory and each people.

Among the inland countries and towns he mentions are Lobaka (Labakót *i. e.* Lahore); Sagala which was captured by Alexander and traces of which are still to be found on a hill about 60 miles from Lahore; \* Indabara (Indraprastha *i. e.* ancient Delhi); Madura (Mathura) 'the city of gods'; Prasikí (Práchyaka or the Eastern Province); Sambalaka (Sambhal in Rohilkhand); Konagora (Kanauj); Abiria (the country of the *Abhir Khasatriyas* lying to the east of the Indus where it bifurcates to form the delta); Syrastrênê (Surashtra *i. e.* Guzerat); Barygaza (Bharoach); Ozone (Ujjayini); Nasika; Palimbathra (Patna); Tamalites (Tamluk; *Sansk.* Tamralipti; *Pali* Tamalitti), a

great emporium of trade between India and Ceylon ; the country of the Gangaridoi lying about the mouths of the Ganges with its capital Gangê, an important seat of commerce ; Modogulla (Mudgol) ; Pounnata whence came the beryl ; and Madura the capital of the Pandya kings of Southern India.

Then comes Ptolemy's description of "India beyond the Ganges". During the time which elapsed between the date of the *Periplus* and that of Marinus it is certain that some adventurous Greek seamen had visited those regions. But accuracy of geographical information was too much to be expected from these illiterate navigators and hence Ptolemy's ideas regarding the east coast of the Gangetic Gulf were of the vaguest sort. He traces the coastline of "India beyond the Ganges" from the easternmost mouth of that river to the Great Promontory where India becomes conterminous with the country of the Sinai (China). Most of the places he mentions are out of recognition to-day but his *Pentapolis* has by some been sought to be identified with Chittagong or *Chaturgram*. The Malay Peninsula he mentions under the appellation of "Aurea Chersonesus" or "The Golden Peninsula." But he totally misconceived the bearings of the coast which he hypothetically assumed to have been continuous with the southernmost part of Africa and was hence under the delusion that the Indian Ocean was bounded on all sides by land like the Mediterranean Sea.

It is time we ended our cursory notice of Ptolemy's Geography so far as it concerns India by referring to his account of the pendant island of Ceylon, which is wonderfully accurate and ample. Among the many facts he records are the 'long tresses of its men, its produce which consisted in rice, honey, ginger, beryl, hyacinth and its great mineral wealth. Elephants and even tigers

abounded in the island. Ptolemy also speaks of a magnetic rock on the south coast of India which had a very disastrous influence on ships with iron nails passing near it.\*

**(f) Other Classical Writers about India.**

It should by no means be supposed that we have already run over the whole field of classical notices of India. The writers we have noticed above are only the more important ones and it is hardly possible to huddle all the rest within the four corners of this essay. Bardesanes (2nd cent. A. D.) and Porphyry (3rd cent. A. D.), Dion Chrysostom (1st cent. A.D.), Clemens Alexandrinus (3rd cent. A. D.) and Stabios (6th cent. A. D.) give interesting pieces of information about the Brahmins. It was Dion Chrysostom who affirmed that the poetry of Homer was sung by the Indians who had translated it into their language and modes of expression. This affirmation only shows that Dion had heard something about the great Indian Epic, the *Rāmāyanam*. Clemens Alexandrinus records the well-known fact that the Buddhists worshipped 'a kind of pyramid' beneath which they thought the bones of some divinity lay buried (*stupas* or *topes*).†

Another very popular ‡ book on universal geography was written about the 3rd century A. D., by Dionysios, surnamed *Periégétés*. It contains several lines of exquisite beauty which incidentally set forth with great vivid-

\* This a very old story. Aristotle had mentioned one such rock and Sindbad the Sailor in the Thousand and One Nights recounts his adventures with another. McCrindle quotes Dr. Ball (*Economic Geography of India*, p. 37) to show that these rocks were probably certain hill ranges in Southern India which mainly consist of magnetic iron.

† The word *Stupa* is the origin of the English *tope*. ‡ It is curious that, also in Icelandic, *Stupa* signifies a tower.

‡ The popularity of the work may be seen from the fact that it was translated into Latin by Priscian the grammarian and used as a school book for teaching Geography.

ness the popular notions about India current at the time. The following lines are taken from Dr. Nolan's English translation :

“To the East a lovely country wide extends,  
India, whose borders the broad ocean bounds ;  
On this the sun, new rising from the main,  
Smiles pleased, and sheds his early orient beam.  
The inhabitants are swart, and in their locks  
Betray the tints of the dark hyacinth.  
Various their functions : some the rock explore,  
And from the mine extract the latent gold ;  
Some labour at the woof with cunning skill,  
And manufacture linen ; others shape  
And polish ivory with the nicest care.  
Many retire to river's shoal, and plunge  
To seek the beryl flaming in its bed,  
Or glittering diamond. Oft the jasper's found,  
Green but diaphanous ; the topaz too,  
Of ray serene and pleasing ; last of all,  
The lovely amethyst, in which combine  
All the mild shades of purple. The rich soil  
Washed by a thousand rivers, from all sides  
Pours on the natives wealth without control.”

*(g) The alleged travels of Apollonius of Tyana in India.*

There were also others who wrote about India. Among them were those who have preserved for us the fragments of the Macedonian historians and they have already been mentioned above. There is another very curious treatise dealing with the life of one Apollonius of Tyana, written by Philostrates (2nd. cent. A. D.), in which there are many references to India. Apollonius was a Pythagorean and sought like his Master to extend the bounds of his knowledge along with those of his travels and mix ‘with the far-famed Brahmins of India. On his way thither he met at Ninevah with a learned Assyrian named Damis who accompanied him on his

travels and kept a record of his sayings and doings. The record however proves beyond all doubt that Damis was an arrant story-teller. It is said that on arriving at Taxila the travellers saw an elephant which had fought with Alexander, and as Apollonius came to India about the middle of the first century of the Christian era, this venerable animal was an old world relic and had attained the patriarchal age of 400 ! \* The King spoke Greek and received the strangers with courtesy. Outside the city was a temple of marble with a shrine and many columns. Round the walls of this shrine were pictures on copper plates representing the feats of Alexander and Porus, just as the walls of Dido's temple of Juno were hung with the pictures of the war of Troy. The king gave the travellers letters of introduction to Iarchus, who was the chief of the Brahmins and had his seat on the banks of the Ganges. On their way to that place the travellers saw several triumphal arches in honour of Alexander and witnessed the altars built by the Macedonian hero on the Hyphasis. Damis, repeating Ktesias, tells wonderful stories about that river which had in its waters a kind of worm yielding a highly inflammable oil and a species of fish with golden tails which they could spread out like a fan. On its banks grew a tree, an unguent prepared from whose bark was considered virtuous in matters matrimonial, while in its marshes roamed the unicorn ass, cups made from whose horn possessed such magical virtues. We may here part company with the two travellers and return to consider other important events.

### *The decay of Roman commerce.*

From the time of Ptolemy no important addition was made to geographical knowledge. No recording travellers

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\* McCrindle.



before Cosmas Indikopleustes (6th cent. A.D.) visited the Eastern shores for a good length of time. Before however we can go up to him events had occurred which were very far-reaching in their consequence. Roman trade which had been for a long time on the decline, concerned itself for the few remaining centuries with articles of necessity and not of luxury. The trade at Alexandria, though at no time completely stopped, suffered a great deal by the brutal treatment the city had received at the hands of Caracalla. The Palmyrene trade also received its death-blow by the destruction of Palmyra itself in 273. Commodities indeed continued to struggle overland, but the flourishing condition of that trade was a matter of the past. The Sassanids of Persia had risen to considerable power and monopolised the trade with India to such an extent that Roman vessels were practically swept off the Indian seas. In the meantime Rome herself was passing under the throes of revolution. A rapid succession of weak rulers and perpetual assassinations became the order of the day. The fatal caprice of Constantine by changing the seat of government had already divided and weakened the force of the empire (330 A.D.). At length the storm which had so long been brewing over the Western Empire burst forth upon its head. The fatal gift of beauty with which Italy was endowed invited the northern barbarians into her plains. She was attacked by the Goths and seized by Alaric in 410. Attila ravaged her fair lands in 451. Three years later the huge wave of Vandalism swept off her arts. She was pillaged again in 472 and in the year 476 'eternal' Rome, the mother of all arts and all civilization, who was so proud of the achievements of her sons, 'stood childless and crownless in her voiceless woe' like another 'Niobe all tears.'

***Constantinople as a centre of Indian trade.***

The condition of Roman commerce might well be surmised from the events referred to above. That Indian goods to some extent found their way into Rome even in her worst days, appears from the fact that when Alaric spared that city in 408, he demanded as a part of the ransom 3000 pounds of pepper. But during these hot days of troubles and revolutions the once mighty stream of Roman commerce shrivelled up to a considerable extent and would have dried out altogether if Constantinople had not taken the place of Rome. Though Italy somewhat revived and flourished under her Gothic kings, her eastern trade did not attain its former bulk. Rome had ceased for ever to be the centre of luxury and culture and Constantinople was the city where trade began to gather in force. It flew in not only through the overland route along the Oxus and the Caspian but also through its old channel along the Red Sea and the Nile. Alexandria looked up again, but it did not recover fully from the shock it had received.

***Cosmas Indikopleustes.***

Such remained the state of affairs till the days of Justinian (d. 565) when Cosmas Indikopleustes wrote his *Christian Topography* in the middle of the sixth century. Cosmas was at first a merchant of Alexandria and had visited many distant lands as far eastward as the shores of India, which earned him the surname of *Indikopleustes* or "*the Indian Navigator*." Later on, by a process of transition only too common in those days, the merchant was changed into a monk; and in the repose of monastic life he set about recording his previous experiences in a book called the *Christian Topography*.

After describing some Indian plants and animals Comas gives an account of Taprobane\* which was encircled by a cluster of smaller islands, all having fresh water and cocoanut trees. Taprobane was divided between two hostile kings, one of whom possessed the mountains and the hyacinth and the other enjoyed the more solid riches of foreign trade and commercial ports which were greatly resorted to by ships from all parts of India and from China, Persia and Ethiopia importing into them silks, aloes, clove wood, sandal wood and other products. Trade was carried on with Male (Malabar) which produced pepper, with Kalliana (Kalyana) where were found copper, sesame wood and materials for dress, with Sindu (Sindh) where musk or castor was got and with Persia and other places. The trade with Persia consisted chiefly in horses and was exempted from custom-house dues. From Cosmas we learn therefore that the Persians had entered into the Indian trade. To him also we are indebted for another piece of information. Both in Ceylon and in Southern India Cosmas found many Christian Churches set up by missionaries from Persia. There is no doubt that these were offshoots of the Nestorian Church which had settled in Persia.

***Christianity in India.—St. Thomas, the Apostle of the Indians.***

This last fact recorded by Cosmas presents India in a new light to us. From the earliest times commerce seems to have been the main link between the East and the West, but with the birth of Christianity India received her share of attention from the missionaries of that faith. Soon after the Ascension of Christ apostles went wide over the world scattering the

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\* Cosmas calls it very nearly by its Sanskrit name, *Sinhaladvipa* (Σινελή βη). He says that he drew his account of the island from a certain acquaintance of his, named Sopater, who had been to Ceylon in the capacity of a merchant.

seeds of religion and morality, and it is not likely that they forgot to come to India. Indeed St. Thomas is mentioned in connexion with that country by the apocryphal "Acts of Apostles" written about the end of the 2nd century. The commonly received tradition among the Catholics is that St. Thomas, after converting King Gondophares,\* preached in Southern India on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, founded several churches and at last died a martyr's death near Madras about 68 A.D. We need not go into the discrepancies of several other accounts of the first planting of Christianity on Indian soil. We need not examine whether the St. Thomas mentioned in connexion with India was the St. Thomas of the Gospel, or a Manichean of the third century, or an Armenian merchant who flourished about the eighth. At any rate it is certain that Christianity was an established religion in Southern India about the 2nd century.

### *Other missionary efforts in Ancient India.*

We learn from Eusebios, Bishop of Caesarea (b. 264 A.D)† that Pantainos of Alexandria was fired with a zeal for preaching the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the east and accordingly set sail for India about the end of the second century. There on the Malabar coast he found that a missionary named St. Bartholomew had already anticipated him by preaching the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, a copy of which was shown to Pantainos.

### *Alfred the Great's embassy to the Shrines of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew.*

Thus St. Thomas was the first 'Apostle' of the Indians and St. Bartholomew their first missionary. To

\* The coins of this king are common in Kabul and Kandahar and in the Western and Southern Punjab.—Cunningham quoted by Rae in his *Syrian Church in India* p. 53.

† *Ecc. Hist.* v. 10.—McCrindle. It has been supposed, however, that the field of Bartholomew's labours was a part of Arabia Felix, inhabited by Jews, to whom alone a Hebrew Gospel could be of any service.

the shrines of both came occasional pilgrims and King Alfred is said to have sent there, in discharge of a vow, some presents in 883. Sighelm who was sent as an ambassador for this purpose brought back from India many brilliant exotic gems and aromatic juices. Some of these oriental presents were to be seen even as late as the time of William of Malmesbury.\*

### *Barlaam and Josaphat.*

Another very curious incident may be noticed in this connexion. Several oriental scholars, and foremost among them Prof. Max Müller†, have successfully shown that Buddha himself figured as a Christian saint named Josaphat who is said to have been an Indian prince converted to the religion of Christ by a hermit, Barlaam. The story of Barlaam and Josaphat was at first written in Greek by St. John of Damascus in the 8th century, and translated into Arabic and then into Latin, it reached western Europe by the middle of the twelfth. Popularised in Troubadour poetry it spread throughout Europe and at last found a place in the Roman martyrology for the 27th November. The story is exactly similar to that of Buddha, even the very name Josaphat agreeing exactly with Bodhisattva. The magician, Theudas, who was employed to seduce the royal convert, had his original in the Buddhist schismatic Devadatta.‡ We need not detain ourselves longer over this, but enough has been said to indicate the new phase of European thought about India and her people.

\* *Chronicle of the Kings of England* II. iv.

† Max Müller's *Chips from a German Workshop* IV. pp 177-89 Ed. 1875.

‡ An episode of the story has been used by Boccaccio (*Decam.* X. i), by Gower (*Conf. Am.* V. 2273 ff) and by the compiler of the *Gesta Romanorum*, and it is to this episode, as it appears in the last mentioned store-house of such tales, that we owe the 'casket scenes' in Shakspeare's *Merchant of Venice*.

***The Rise of Muhammadanism.—The Black  
Sea trade.***

During the reign of Justinian the trade with India in silk lost almost all its importance by the introduction of the silk-worm into Europe.\* Other events took place which greatly crippled the trade of the Byzantines with India. Five years after the death of Justinian there was born in the desert of Arabia a child who was destined, with the sword in one hand and the *Koran* in the other, to lay under his feet a great portion of the inhabited globe. United under one religion and inoculated with the idea of conquest, the hardy Arabs sallied out of their desert homes, declared war against the Roman Emperor Heraclius two years after the death of the Prophet and within a hundred years of that event carried the Crescent from the banks of the Guadalquivir to those of the Indus. The sudden rise of this new power threw a barrier across the channels of Indian traffic with Europe. Persia whose fate was sealed on the field of Nehawand (642) was one of the earliest possessions of this conquering race. The flourishing trade which the Sassanids had so long carried on with the Indian continent, passed into the hands of the Arabs, but did not suffer thereby. Not unmindful of the profits of such a commerce the Arabs did everything to encourage it and Caliph Omar built the city of Bussorah with that express purpose. The subjugation of Syria took place not long after and the Saracenic arms were carried into Egypt in 640. Alexandria, though reconquered by the Romans in 645, fell again under the Moslemic sway before the year was out. The Eastern Empire was thus very much narrowed down and European trade with the East suffered in consequence. But it could not be allowed to die out altogether. It is a well known mental law that

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\* Gibbon XL. iii.

when the desire of gratifying a passion runs high, difficulties serve only to intensify it. Driven out from the bazars of Syria and Alexandria the industry of the European nations directed itself to an old and tedious route of commerce. The productions of India were carried up the Indus and then brought on camels to the banks of the Oxus. From thence they proceeded down that stream to the Caspian Sea where they entered the Volga and sailing up that river were again carried by land to the Tanais (*mod.* Don). They were thence conveyed to the Black Sea where ships from Constantinople awaited their arrival.

### *The Rise of Venice and Genoa.*

These commodities were not consumed by the Byzantines alone. Other nations had in the meantime arisen who desired to partake of the spoils of the East. They had been formed out of the ribs of Rome. 'The limbs of the old Empire had indeed been mangled, but they had been seething so long in Medea's caldron only to come forth whole and young and strong.' Symptoms of life were discernible in Italy and various causes, which it is not our purpose to survey, concurred in restoring liberty and independence to its cities. Venice had been formed in 452 on a crowded cluster of islets by the last fugitives from the vengeance of Attila, who sought shelter in the marshy lagoons at the head of the Adriatic. She had entered into commercial relations with Alexandria and Constantinople, but had not yet attained the zenith of her glory. The maritime situation of Genoa developed in her people a special aptitude for navigation and commerce and she had entered into the trade of the Levant even earlier than Venice. On the conquest of Egypt and Syria by the Arabs, Constantinople became the chief mart to which the Italians resorted. In course of time however the mutual antipathy between the Moslems and the Christians were to a certain

extent sunk in a common interest of gain ; and the bazars of Syria and Alexandria began to be frequented by the Venetians and the Genoese between whom a suicidal competition had already begun.

### *The Crusades.*

Shortly an event happened which, though it at first put a check to the commercial progress of the Italians, eventually rendered it more rapid. Palestine was conquered by the Fatamides of Egypt in 969, and in consequence of the persecution of the Christians, Peter the Hermit began preaching the first Crusade in 1094. The eighth and last Crusade of St. Louis was concluded in 1272. All through this time Genoa and Venice vied with each other in supplying the assembled monarchs of Europe with transports and provisions and military stores. Their chief motive seems rather to have been to extend their commercial relations than to secure the Holy Sepulchre in Christian possession. Availing themselves of the discords among the Crusading nations and actuated by mutual jealousies, Venice and Genoa always ranged themselves on opposite sides and thus actually began to play at see-saw with fortune.

### *The influence of the Crusades on the Eastern trade.*

The Crusades removed the barriers of the Eastern trade and it began to revive with renewed vigour. On the European side it was monopolised entirely by Genoa and Venice both of which received from the Crusaders some maritime ports and extended commercial privileges in the Christian settlements made in and about Palestine. But the Black Sea trade remained entirely in the hands of the Genoese, Venice being completely kept out of the field. Venice, however, was not put to any disadvantage by this.



Under the military government of Saladin and his successors, security and order were steadily maintained in Egypt, and trade began to look up at Alexandria and was open to all. It was openly prosecuted in the land of the infidels by Arab merchants without any fulminations from their spiritual authorities. But it was otherwise with the Christians whose feelings of antipathy against the Saracens ran highest about the time of the Crusades. They were not allowed to trade with the Moslems and 'the thunders of the Vatican' were not infrequently hurled at them, if they did not take a special permission from their "Vicar of God." Accordingly, when the Venetians saw the ports of the Black Sea closed to them, they took the sanction of the Pope to trade with the Saracens at Damascus and Alexandria. The Indian commodities that came through the Persian Gulf had to pass through Ormuz, Bussorah and Damascus, while Alexandria commanded the Red Sea traffic. This participation in 'the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind,' the sparkling shower of gems thus poured into her lap by 'the exhaustless East' made Venice a second Tyre and her people the wealthiest in Europe. Her maritime power remained unabated until the discovery of Vasco da Gama.

### **Mediaeval Travellers to the East.\***

#### ***(a) Rabbi Benjamin of Tudella.***

Gradually a communication was being firmly established between the East and the West and it encouraged several persons to advance far beyond the scene of the Crusades and visit the opulent countries to the east. Some of them had even ventured out on their travels while

\* Sir George Birdwood's *Report on the old Records of the India Office* (2nd Ed.). For a complete list drawn up for the first time of mediæval travellers to the east, see Lord Curzon's Introduction to his excellent book on Persia.

the Holy Land was still smoking with the embers of war. The first among the mediæval travellers to India was Rabbi Benjamin of Tudella who set out from Spain in 1160 and travelling by land to Constantinople, proceeded to Chinese Tartary. From thence he took his route towards the south and after visiting various provinces of farther India, embarked and returned by way of Egypt.

*(b) Marco Polo.*

The next great visitor to the East was a Venetian named Marco Polo who, in 1271, accompanied by his father and his uncle, arrived at the court of Kublai Khan at Xanadu (Shangtu), and in course of time visited the southern coasts of India and the adjoining countries. It was simply in the interests of commerce that these Venetians undertook so long and hazardous a journey. Marco Polo's account of his travels was one of the most famous books in the Middle Ages and almost all that mediæval Europe knew about the East was from the pages of his book. It was of great value as a stimulus to and guide in geographical research,\* and it created an immense sensation among the learned public of Europe.†

Marco Polo was born about 1250. Shortly before his birth, his father and his uncle, who were both eminent merchants, travelling east in search of 'barbaric gold,'

\* At any rate Marco Polo's influence on map-making is seen to the greatest advantage in the Catalan Map of 1375. Although the Eastern Peninsula of India is absent from this map, the peninsula of India proper is represented with a fair approximation to its correct form and position. Many details about India, foreign to Polo's book, such as Delhi, Diogil (Deogiri), Multan, Baroch &c., have also been embodied in this map.—See *The Travels of Marco Polo*, ed. Yule, revised by Cordier. (1903). Vol I. p. 134.

† Students of Chaucer are well aware of the theory advanced by Professor Skeat and Mr. Keightley that the materials of the beautiful tale of Cambuscan and Canace were drawn from Marco Polo. This theory, however, has been disputed by Prof. J. M. Manly and Mr. A. W. Pollard who find no reason for pinning Chaucer down to using Marco Polo, to the exclusion of other eminent accessible authorities.

had reached the court of the Great Khan of Tartary and been received by him with great kindness. After a long stay of nineteen years at that place the Polos came back to Venice as envoys from the great chief to the Pope. They set out on their return journey only two years after, being accompanied this time by young Marco Polo. The Polos now travelled to Ormuz, an island at the northside of the Persian Gulf to which young Marco saw many merchants resort, bringing spices, pearls, precious stones, cloths of gold and silver, elephants' tusks and all other precious things from India. 'The people of Ormuz had not very stout ships, for they did not fasten them with iron nails but with 'wooden pins with threads drawn from the shells of Indian nuts.' The ships had each but one mast, one sail, one beam and were covered with but one deck. They were not caulked with pitch but with the oil and fat of fishes ; and thus many were lost while crossing the sea to India. Marco Polo also mentions the curious fact that at Ormuz, when the heat was very great, people spent the whole day in water.

The Polos then crossed over to Persia and traversing Kerman and Khorasan went on to Badakshian where the illness of Marco detained them for a long time. But the fresh and fragrant air of the hills soon set up the young man and the Polos ascended the plateau of Pamir (a name first heard in Marco's book), and passing through regions not described again until our own days, reached at last the court of Kublai Khan. The Khan took a special interest in the witty and observant youth who acquired in a short time a mastery over the language of the Mongols. Marco was from time to time employed on diplomatic missions to the neighbouring countries which greatly enhanced his knowledge about a good part of Asia.

After a long residence at the court of Kublai, the Polos were anxious to return home and enjoy there the fruits

of their toil and enterprise. But they were not easily to be spared by their great patron who was deaf to their importunities and, as Yule says, "but for a happy chance we should have lost our mediæval Herodotus." Kublai Khan had soon to seek the aid of these Venetians as experienced sailors in escorting safely to Tabreez a Mongol princess who was meant as a bride for a Persian Khan. The Polos eagerly grasped at this unexpected offer and accordingly set out with the princess in 1292. Travelling through China and then sailing the Chinese Sea and the Indian Ocean, the hardy Venetians at last delivered the bride safely after two years of peril and adventure. After this they continued their journey home which they finished in 1295.

Three years later Marco Polo was among the prisoners taken by the Genoese in a victory at sea over Venice and he remained in a dungeon till peace was made between the two republics in the following year. Within the walls of that dungeon he used to beguile the time by dictating to a fellow-prisoner, named Rusticiano, the details of his eastern travels, and it was Rusticiano who afterwards gave them to the world.

Released from the prison, Marco Polo lived in peace and prosperity, and twenty-nine years after his return from the East and two years before 'Sir John Maundeville' set out upon his travels, he died full of years and honours in 1324.

### *Marco Polo's account of India.*

Marco Polo's knowledge of Kashmir was acquired during his journey to the court of Kublai Khan; and he mentions among other things the beauty of its women, the notoriety of its men as great magicians, the idolatry of its inhabitants and its excellent climate. <sup>3</sup>

Again, the first diplomatic mission to Annam on which he was employed made him acquainted with Thibet and Bengal. He notices the idolatry of the people of Bengal,

their great trade in cotton, their simple fare consisting of rice, milk and flesh, and the abundance of spices, sugar and ginger in their country. He also mentions its evil notoriety for a traffic in eunuchs and in slaves, both male and female.\*

His knowledge of the islands about India and of its southern part was wholly derived during his voyage home. After describing in brief the great island of Java which was supposed by the mariners to be the largest in the world,† Marco goes on to Zeilan (Ceylon). It was the richest island in the world and had the best rubies, sapphires, topazes and amethysts. There were in it plenty of rice and sesame oil, milk and 'wine of trees.' On the top of a very steep mountain in the interior was, as the Saracens said, the sepulchre of Adam, or as the idolators said, the body of Sagomon Barcha,‡ their first idol-founder, son to the king of that island who betook himself to a solitary life on the top of this hill from whence no pleasure or persuasion could draw him. His foreteeth and a dish belonging to him were still solemnly kept and shown as holy relics.§

Marco then passes on to the mainland of India and describes the pearlfishery of the great province of Maabar.|| To the eye of the Venetian the people of that part appeared as so many naked savages whose king went about as naked as the rest, with a collar of precious stones about his neck and a garland of pearls used as a rosary.¶ The

\* *Marco Polo*. (Vol. I p. 115.)

† *Ib.* Vol. II p. 272.

‡ Sakya Muni Buddha.

§ The details given by Marco Polo of the history of Sakya's devotion to an ascetic life are generally correct, which indicates the impression made by the story on his mind.—See Vol. II pp. 317-18.

|| Maabar was the name given by the Muhammadans of this time to a tract corresponding in a general way to what is now called the Coromandel coast. *Marco Polo* Vol. II. p. 332, note I.

¶ *Ib.* p. 336.

criminal laws were very severe and persons sentenced to death were despatched in a peculiar way. A person so condemned was led before an idol where he inflicted upon himself twelve mortal wounds, saying at each blow, "I kill myself in honour of the god." When at last he died, his body was taken away by his relatives and burnt. Wives threw themselves on the pyres of their husbands.\* The people were superstitious and many were the augurs and soothsayers who observed beasts and birds and the unlucky days. They were pharisaical with regard to their food and ablutions. They washed twice a day, each time before a meal, and did not use the left hand while eating. Each drank in his own pot which he did not allow to touch his mouth. Drunkenness was looked down upon as unworthy of an honest man. Animal food was not prohibited but beef was an abomination, the cow being an object of worship. Many girls were dedicated as dancing girls to the temples and boys were early trained to earn their livelihood by selling pearls. The country was infested with scorpions and fleas, to escape from which a very nice contrivance was generally made. Men slept at night in litters made of cane which were drawn up to the ceiling and let down again at day-break.† Marco does not fail to notice that floors were daubed with cow-dung.‡ There were a people called Gaui who had no objection to taking beef if the animal had died of itself. They were the descendants of those who had killed St. Thomas.

Then follows a description of the tomb of St. Thomas which was much frequented by both Christians and Saracens. Marco then describes the kingdom of Mutfli by which he

\* *Marco Polo*, Vol. II p. 340.

† *Ib.* p. 346.

‡ *Ib.* p. 340.

means Teliganna which was then ruled by the Kakateya dynasty reigning at Warangal. The name Mutfili belonged to a port in the Gantur district of the Madras Presidency, about 170 miles north of Fort St. George.\* When Marco visited this kingdom it was ruled by a Queen who was a lover of justice, of equity and of peace. In this kingdom there was an abundance of diamond, one way of collecting which was somewhat peculiar. It was found in plenty in the alluvial bed of rivers, but the mountain valleys contained the largest amount. To get these diamonds people threw down lean pieces of meat into the valleys, upon which eagles pounced down from the rocks. When these pieces of meat were carried by the birds to some high places, the people raised a loud cry to frighten them away. The pieces of meat when recovered were found full of diamonds stuck into them.†

Westward from Mutfili was Lar‡ where there were a good many Brahmins. These men were the most honest merchants ; they never told a lie for all the world and betrayed nobody's trust. They were known by their thread, and had each but one wife. They were great astrologers, practised great abstinence and enjoyed long life. They constantly chewed a certain leaf with spices and lime, which they called *tambul* and which they considered very good for their teeth and digestion. Some of their religious men were stark naked. They lived austere, worshipped the cow and esteemed every thing to have soul. They ate no vegetables in the green state which they said was a mark of life, and they would never kill an animal. They attached great importance to chastity among

\* *Marco Polo*. Vol. II ♣. 362, note 1.

† This is a very old legend. It is also related by Sindbad the Sailor.

‡ Here there is a hopeless confusion. Lar was an early name for Guzerat and the northern Kanhan. It appears in Ptolemy in the form *Larike* (McCrindle, p. 38). But this would certainly be in accord with Marco's description of it as lying west of Madras.

themselves and when a novice was brought to them they put him to the test in the following way. They sent for some dancing girls and made them on different occasions try the continence of the novice. If he remained indifferent, they retained him, but expelled him in the contrary case.

Marco Polo then describes some other places. Cael, a great city, was ruled by a king who was very kind to merchants. In Coulam, which was five hundred miles southwest from Maabar, there were pepper and indigo. The people of the place had a very curious custom viz., that of marrying their sisters and near relations. In Camari there were apes as large as men, and Delai\* had a great quantity of spices. In Maabar and Guzerat there were many pirates who sometimes put out to sea with about a hundred sail and attacked merchantmen. In Guzerat there was abundant cotton, the plants growing very high and lasting twenty years. In Cambay there were much indigo, buckrum and cotton, and Semnath was a place full of idolators and merchants.

### (c) *Marino Sanuto.*

Following these travellers whom the prospect of commercial advantage had sent forth to the East, were others who ventured into those regions from religious zeal or from mere curiosity.

About five years after the return of the Polos, a Venetian nobleman named Marino Sanuto, his curiosity probably being whetted by their accounts, set upon his travels in the East. From his book we get a fairly good account of the Western commerce with India at the time. The European

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\* "This name survives in that of Mount Dely, properly Mount d'Ely, the only spur of the Ghats that reaches the sea within the Madras territory. It is an isolated and very conspicuous hill forming a promontory, some 16 miles north of Cananore, the first Indian land seen by Vasco da Gama on the memorable morning in 1498."—*Marco Polo*, Vol. II, p. 386. Note 1.



branch of that commerce was in the hands of the Venetians and other nations of Italy, and on the Asiatic side it was in the hands of the Arabs, or Moors as they were called. The rarer commodities, *e.g.* cloves, nutmeg, mace, gems and pearls, were conveyed up the Persian Gulf to Bussorah on the Euphrates whence they passed up the Tigris to Baghdad and were carried across the Syrian desert to Antioch and Cilicia whence they embarked for Europe in Venetian and Genoese boats. But all the more bulky goods, *e.g.* pepper and cinnamon, were conveyed by the Red Sea and across the Lybian desert and sent down the Nile to Alexandria.

*(d) Odorico de Pordenone.*

Almost close upon the heels of Sanuto, the celebrated Odorico de Pordenone started on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas. From Ormuz he took ship to Thana in Salsette near Bombay (1321). Here or at Soupara he gathered the bones of four missionaries who had suffered martyrdom shortly before his arrival. He mentions the immense quantity of pepper cultivated in Malabar. From India he sailed away in a Chinese junk to Sumatra and is the first European who distinctly mentions the name of that island. He then visited various other countries and describes the realm of Thibet and the Grand Lama who was its Pope.

*(e) Sir John Maundeville.\**

Passing by the travels of some other Christian missionaries we come to "Sir John Maundeville" who is said to have travelled over a great part of Asia (1322-1345) and written an account of the various countries he claimed to have visited. The English version of the account was long

\* The passages quoted are from the 1866 re-issue of Halliwell's edition.

regarded as the earliest work in English prose dealing with secular subjects and was so popular that, as Halliwell says, "of no book with the exception of the Scriptures can more manuscripts be found." But the authenticity of the travels has been doubted as well as the very existence of a person named Maundeville. It seems to be the opinion of some modern scholars that the book which goes by his name was a compilation by a physician of Liège, Jehan de Bourgogne by name, who wrote under the *nom de guerre* of "Sir John Maundeville, Knight, of St. Albans in England."

His book "treateth of the way to Hierusalem and of the marvayles of Ynde and other islands and countreyes." He professes to have "passid to see the 3er of our Lord" 1322, visiting not only the Holy Land but many countries further east including even China. Modern scholarship, however, with its searchlight of criticism has at last seen through the pretensions of the knight and declared his accounts to be nothing better than "a knavish trading on human credulity." His powers at drawing the long bow have never been surpassed, and "the wary eye" which Sir Thomas Browne is content to "carry" in reading "Paulus Venetus" could be nowhere more exercised than in the pages of good Sir John. He never visited any place except Jerusalem and as to the more distant travels his narrative was based on the itineraries of previous travellers which were stuffed out with fabulous stories of all kinds borrowed from Pliny and other writers of antiquity.

"The lande of Ynde" took its name from a river in which there were "Eles of 30 fote long and more." The people who dwelt on the banks of that river were "of evylle colour, greene and zallow." The whole continent of India was thermally divided into three parts—the cold, the temperate and the hot. The best diamonds came from there and were common.

upon "the Roches in the See and upon the Hills where the Myne of Gold is." Then follows a good piece of mineralogical information in the assertion that "these diamonds were norysscht with the dew of Heven" and that they grew together, male and female, "bringing forth smale children that multiplyen and growen all the yer.\* The Indians were mostly stay-at-home people and this accounted for the largeness of the population. In the country of "Mabarou where lieth the body of Seynt Thomas the Apostle" was a great idol decked with pearls and precious stones. During festivities it was gorgeously dressed and set upon a gilded car and paraded through the city with "gret solempnytee." In front of the car walked the maidens of the city 'two and two to gedre' and then came the pilgrims some of whom fell down "under the the wheles of the chare and let the chare gone over hem; so that thei ben dede anon." The idol was then brought back to the temple and the bodies of the persons killed were placed before it in a heap. Maundeville also mentions the fact that pilgrims used to kneel every third pace they went from their houses towards the temple. It thus appears that he had heard something about the great car festival at Puri where the temple had already been in existence for over a century and a half. Like Cosmas, Maundeville identifies the Scriptural Phison with the Ganges, in which river there were

\* This assertion was no doubt due to the notion held by the Alchemists of old that male and female principles ran through all the three worlds alike, animal, vegetable and mineral;—from which it followed that the union of two metals could produce a third. Ben Jonson refers to it in the *Alchemist* I. ii.

Of that air  
And oily water, mercury is engendered;  
Sulphur of the fat and earthy part; the one,  
Which is the last, supplying the place of male,  
The other of the female, in all metals."

It may be interesting to learn that this notion is fossilised in the word, *arsenic* (Gk. *arsenikon* *ma'c*).

“many precouse stones and mochel of Lignu Aloes\* and moche gravelle of gold.” Not satisfied with all this Maundeville ventures upon an etymological note upon the name of the river which, he thought, was so called because it ran through the land of “a king called Gangeres.”

Maundeville’s descriptions of “the isles of Ynde” are entertaining in the highest degree. In these islands that good Christian solemnly affirms to having seen with his own eyes men with “gret Eres and long, that hangen down to here knees,” people with hoofs like horses, persons having the face “all platt, all pleyne withouten Nese and withouten Mouth” but having “two small holes alle round instede of here Eyen,” and such other aberrations of nature. In one of these islands Sir John saw a “fayre Welle and a gret that hathe odour and savour of alle spices, and at every hour of the day he chaungethe his odour and his savour diversely. And whoso drinketh 3 tymes fasting of that watre of Welle he is hool of alle manner sicknesse that he hath.” Such an opportunity was not to be lost and our traveller drank thereof three or four times and affirms with all the solemnity at his command that he fared the better for it.†

Maundeville also speaks of the “Roches of the Adamandes” lying somewhere in the Indian Ocean which drew to them with irresistible force ships sailing past that had any iron bolts or nails in them.

\* *Lignu Aloe* or eagle-wood is the Malayan *agila*, Sansk. *aguru*, a kind of sandal-wood. According to Roger Bacon, *lignu aloë* was one of the ingredients of the elixir invented by Petro de Maharancourt to prevent the infirmities of old age.

† That the water of some fountains has medicinal properties is very true and well known. But it was supposed in these superstitious times to have possessed other virtues as well. See Spenser’s *Faery Queen* ¶. ix 29. Every reader of English literature is aware of the important part played by a “Virtuous well” in Fletcher’s *Faithful Shepherdess*. For a good number of references in English literature to similar fountains see Mr. Percival’s learned edition of *Faerie Queene*, I (Macmillan & Co.)

Many were the places in the East which were honoured by the visit of this worthy Christian knight, excepting one place and that was Paradise of which he could not speak properly, "for he was not there." "It is far beyond and that forethinketh me and also I was not worth." With a hearty sympathy for this unfortunate man we close here our notice of his "travels".

### **The History of the Portuguese discovery of India.**

We do not come to another European account of the East before the middle of the next century. During all this time however the curiosity of Europe with respect to those regions was always wide awake and insensibly led them to attempt new discoveries. The exclusiveness of trade which on the European side was in the hands of Venice and Genoa, and the difficulties of transit caused the goods to be sold at exceedingly high prices in the marts of other nations who were therefore anxious to provide themselves more directly with these Eastern commodities. Again the uncertainty of the ancient routes, a lesson too well and too recently taught by the Crusades to be forgotten, put the idea of finding a direct sea route to India into men's minds. The time was fast approaching when the mind of Europe was to lay aside the torpor of ages and exert itself to the utmost in every possible direction of human improvement. The long night of mediæval ignorance was soon to pass away disclosing a beautiful and wonderful world to the gaze of mankind. The middle of the fifteenth century is generally fixed upon as the dawn of this bright era of human knowledge but stray rays of light had already begun to lessen the darkness at the close of the fourteenth. The movements of the fifteenth century have aptly been compared to the upturnings of a

volcano, but already at the close of the fourteenth the tremours and rumblings had begun to be perceived.

We are not concerned here with any phase of the Renaissance other than the geographical discoveries that took place as its consequence. Various circumstances roused the little kingdom of Portugal to lead the van of maritime exploration. The constant wars which the Portuguese had so long carried on with the Moors had developed in them a martial spirit which distinguished them among the nations of Europe. Added to this the proximity of Portugal to the sea had made its inhabitants naturally inclined to navigation and commerce. The several maritime victories obtained by King John the Great and King Alfonso V over the Moors of Morocco had made the Portuguese sailors well acquainted with the difficulties of navigation of the north-western shoulders of Africa. But Cape Nam (Fish Cape) was their *ne plus ultra*, as is shown by a contemporary proverb, *Quem passar o Cabo de Nam ou tornará, ou não* (Whoso passeth Cape No will come back or no). The limits of maritime exploration were pushed further by an impulse from Prince Henry the Navigator, "the Lusitanian prince" of Thomson's oft-quoted lines. If ever a man was filled with 'the desire to do good,' it was he. Desirous of securing a share in the Eastern trade for his countrymen and ambitious of making geographical discoveries, this illustrious prince set himself to find out a direct sea-route to India. He established himself at Sagres (Cape St. Vincent) in full view of the ocean constantly urging him towards the accomplishment of his favourite project. He established there a naval college and an observatory and gave himself to the study of geography, astronomy and other sciences upon which the art of navigation is founded. The period of the revival of letters was also the period of the revival of science in consequence of which geography

received its due share of attention. The works of Strabo and Ptolemy and other writers of antiquity were once more brought into notice, and a study of these convinced Prince Henry of the possibility of reaching India by sailing around the African continent. To silence the murmurs of opposition and to secure the full enjoyment of his discoveries, Henry obtained the protection of a Papal bull granting him an exclusive right with regard to the lands he should discover from Cape Nam to India. Year after year expeditions were sent forth to explore the projected route, but Henry died in 1473 before accomplishing his object.

### **Mediæval Travellers to the East.\*—(Contd.)**

#### *(f) Nicolo Conti.*

We shall make a digression here to notice two more foreign accounts of India before we come back to resume the thread of our narrative. About 1417 Nicolo Conti, a noble Venetian, travelled in the East for twenty-five years, of which travel he has left an account. Starting from Damascus he passed on to Baghdad and then taking ship at Bussorah arrived at Cambay on the west coast of India. There he observed "those precious stones, sardonyxes." Proceeding southward along the coast he arrived after twenty days' sailing at two cities which grew ginger in abundance. Departing thence and travelling inland for three hundred miles he came to the great city of Bizene-galia (Vijaynagar). After visiting some other inland towns he next arrived at Malepur (Mylapur, a suburb of Madras), where lay the body of St. Thomas. Beyond this was the city "called Cauila where pearls were found. He then crossed over to that noble island Zeilam (Ceylon)

which contained a large quantity of rubies, sapphires, garnets and other stones. Cinnamon also grew there in abundance.

(g) *Athanasius Niktin.*

With the account of another traveller we practically come to the end of our period. He was a Russian named Athanasius Niktin, who having started in 1468, descended the Volga and after a long time reached Hormuz. He describes it as a great centre of trade where the duty was as high as ten per cent. Thence he crossed the "Doria Hindustankia" (Indian Ocean) to Moskhat and thence to Kuzrat (Guzerat) and Kambat (Cambay), which last place was "a port of the whole of India and a manufacturing place for all sorts of goods, *e.g.*, damask, satin and blankets." Here was produced "the blue stone colour" (indigo). He then describes Calicut as producing pepper, colour plants, muscat, cloves, cinnamon, aromatic roots, *adrach* (ginger) and every description of spices, which were sold very cheap. He then proceeded inland and visited Kulbarga, Bidar, Becheneger (Vijaynagar), 'Pervota, the Jerusalem of the Hindus' and other places. In Bidar there was a trade in horses, silks, and in Ethiopian slaves. He was so dazzled by the magnificence of the place that he took it for the chief city of India. 'Becheneger' he describes as being surrounded by three forts and ruled over by a Hindu King who had a numerous army and a palace built on a hill.

**The History of the Portuguese discovery  
of India.—(Contd.)**

We now come back to our history of the Portuguese discovery of India. The work of Prince Henry was continued by the enterprise of Portuguese merchants who had not lost sight of the charge which that Prince had left



to his countrymen on his death-bed. King John II, who succeeded to the throne of Portugal in 1481, took up anew the projects of his great-uncle, Prince Henry the Navigator. To bring "the unfrequented Ynde"\* into direct commercial intercourse with Portugal became the ruling passion of his mind and he declared himself the patron of every attempt towards geographical discovery. Encouraged by this declaration Columbus whose mind had been formed with regard to the possibility of reaching India by continually sailing westward across the Atlantic, approached the King with a request to help him in his projected enterprise. 'John dismissed Columbus, as a visionary and thus left it to Spain to acquire the glory of helping the discovery of the new world of America.' John, however, was not failing in his diligence in making enquiries with regard to India. He ordered Pedro de Covilham and Affonso de Payva to travel overland to India and obtain information regarding the trade and navigation of the Indian seas and to report on the possibility of a voyage round Africa. They were especially enjoined to open communication with the mythical *Preste Joam das Indias*.† Of these men the former alone was able to reach the Malabar Coast. He sent home a very favourable report and confidently gave this opinion that a passage might be found to India by rounding the continent of Africa. In the meantime Bartholomeu Dias, a navigator sent out by John, while groping his way southward along the unexplored part of the West Coast of Africa, had unconsciously doubled the southern extremity of that continent. But a violent storm had compelled the explorer to relin-

\* Marlowe : *Edward II.* Act I. Sc. iv. 50.

† Prestre John of India, a Christian prince, who is said to have ruled somewhere in the East. Matthew Paris, writing about 1250, mentions him as ruling over Tartary and he is not absent from the pages of Maundeville and Marco Polo. St. Louis of France is said to have sent an embassy to his court.

quish his pursuit and return to Lisbon, naming the great promontory he had passed, *Cabo de todos los Tormentos* (Cape of all the Storms), or simply *Cabo Tormentoso* (Cape Storm). King John, however, saw otherwise; he took a brighter view of the matter and changed the ominous name into *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*, Cape of Good Hope (1486), though it was not before another twelve years that the 'good hope' was realised.

Various causes prevented John from following up the discovery of Dias and he died in 1495 without having the good fortune to see the fulfilment of his dearest hopes. Before his death he had the mortification of having rejected the application of Columbus, who now returned with the trophies of a newly discovered world (1493), which he had confounded with India, thus giving rise to the venerable blunder of "*East Indies*" and "*West Indies*."

Emanuel, who succeeded John, equalled him in his ardour in the cause of geographical discovery and the final issue of his endeavours in that direction fully justified his title *O fortunado* (the fortunate). In the month of July 1497 a fleet of three ships was placed under the command of Vasco da Gama, a member of the royal household, to follow out the route taken by Bartholomeu Dias. The results of that expedition are well-known. After a voyage of nearly ten months Da Gama landed at Calicut on the 20th May 1498. The news of this discovery was hailed in Portugal with the greatest joy. An El Dorado floated before the vision and Portuguese mind became intoxicated by dreams of a mighty oriental commerce.

### **Arabic literature and science as a source of European knowledge of India.**

We have hitherto considered the purely European accounts of India. But before parting with the subject of

our discourse it is necessary for us to attend to another important source of European information about this country. That source was Arabic literature and Arabic science. Startling as it may seem, the intellectual salvation of Modern Europe from the benumbing influence of the Middle Ages was in a large measure due to the Arabs. As early as the days of Harun-ar-Raschid, who was a contemporary of Charlemagne, efforts were made by that Caliph to make science and literature the permanent denizens of his empire. These efforts were still further carried under the brilliant rule of his son and successor, Al Mamun, whose caliphate has justly been called the Augustan Age of Islam. Learned men were invited from many different countries and remunerated for their labours with princely munificence; and the works of the best Greek, Syrian, Persian and Indian writers were translated into Arabic and spread over the entire Mahomedan world. In Spain, the University of Cordova rivalled the literary fame of Baghdad, and Mahomedan writers appeared everywhere as the preservers and distributors of knowledge. In the long night of Mediæval ignorance, it was they who kept alive the sacred flame of learning and the number of manuscripts on almost every subject contained in the library of the Escorial at Madrid bears testimony to the universality of their literary tastes. The fame of their wisdom and learning spread far and wide, and pupils from France and other European countries flocked to the Moorish Universities of Spain.

It must, however, be kept in mind that the Arabs in their turn were the disciples of the Hindus. The Hindus were thus the indirect teachers of Europe during the Middle Ages. The waters of science and mathematics which fertilised the intellectual soil of Europe were drawn from Indian fountains although through Arabian strainers and channels.

Among the many sciences taught by Arab philosophers to Europe, the foremost was the science of medicine. They had acquired a great skill in the uses and properties of medicinal herbs, because, as Humboldt says, to them had been early opened the oldest and at the same time one of the richest sources of knowledge,—the medical system of the Indian physicians. This indebtedness to Indian physicians is admitted also by the Arabs themselves. The author of the *Kitab-ul-fihrist*, for instance, writing about the middle of the tenth century, mentions that by order of the Caliphs Harun and Mansur, several standard Indian works on medicine, materia medica and therapeutics were translated into Arabic. The same writer specially mentions that *Susrud* (Susrut) was translated by Mankh the Indian, who cured Harun-ar-Raschid of a severe illness and was appointed physician in charge of the royal hospital. Prof. Müller has proved beyond all doubt that not only Susrut but also Charak (Sarak), the Nidána (Badan) and the compendium Ashtánga (Asankar), a book on poison by Sanaq, and several other works were rendered into Arabic.\* Charak is repeatedly mentioned in the Latin translations of Serapion (Ibn Sarafyun), Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Rhazes (Al Razi). It may be interesting to learn that *deudar*, (Sansk. *devadáru*, *Pinus Diodora*) considered to be a modern discovery, was described centuries ago by Avicenna by its Sanskrit name *deiudar*, and that Serapion mentions the well-known Indian decoction of the three kinds of myrobalan under its Sanskrit name *triphalá*. Thus we find that European medical science was aware of its ultimate indebtedness to the Indians.

Not only in medicine but also in mathematics, Europe was aware of its debt to India. Even before we

\* See Dr. P. C. Ray's *History of Hindu Chemistry*. Vol. I.

come to the Arabs, we find Diophantus (4th cent. A. D.), the earliest Greek writer on Algebra, acknowledging his indebtedness to Hindu mathematicians. This fact is mentioned by Bombelli in a treatise on Algebra published in the year 1579. Bombelli says that he and a lecturer at Rome had translated parts of Diophantus and that they had found "many Indian authors cited in the said work."\* Later on we have overwhelming testimony of Arab writers that Hindu astronomy and algebra were zealously studied by their countrymen and that many Hindu *savants* were induced to reside at the court of the Caliphs. Algebra was introduced into Europe by the Arabs towards the beginning of the 13th century and the early European treatises on that science followed the Arabic ones in mentioning the Indian sages uniformly in terms of high esteem. In Arithmetic also, called in these old European works 'the Arithmetic of the Indians,' the decimal system of notation was first invented by Hindu mathematicians and transmitted to Europe through the Arabs. The nine figures to express the numbers from one to nine, now known under the misnomer of 'Arabic numerals,' were first introduced into Gaul by Gerbert, afterwards Pope Sylvester II, who studied at the University of Seville about 1000 A.D.

To all this must be added the indebtedness of Europe to India for its mediæval literature of fairy tales and fables. Most of the French *fabliaux* which were imitated in English and many other languages, were drawn from Eastern sources, *e.g.*, the famous Indian tale of *The Seven Wise Masters* whose English version was made from the French about the year 1330. But here, as elsewhere, the medium of transmission was Arabic literature which was

\* Hutton's Dict., quoted by Mr. Strachey in his article, "History of Algebra," in the *As. Res.* XII, n. 191.

filled with romantic legends produced by a teeming and luxurious fancy, most of which came from India, the cradle of story and fable. Thus many of the most beautiful and in fancy the richest of the tales of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment* were distinctly of Indian origin; and it was India again that supplied mediæval Europe with the famous fables of Bidpai or Pilpay, a translation of the Sanskrit *Panchatantram*. This Sanskrit book was translated into Pehlvi in the sixth century and thence into Arabic in the eighth. In the Arabic version a wicked king is supposed to have been reclaimed to virtue by a Brahmin named *Bidbah*, a word which can be traced through Pehlvi to Sanskrit *Vidyapati*, or "chief-scholar." This Arabic version was the originator of many other versions *e. g.* the Hebrew (1250 A. D.), the Greek (1100 A. D.) and the Old Spanish (1151 A. D.). The Hebrew translation again was rendered into Latin in 1270 under the title, *Directorium Humanæ Vitæ*, which in its turn caused the famous German version entitled *Das Buch der Byspel der alten Wysen*, first printed in 1481. The English version was made by Sir Thomas North in 1570.

With one more source of European knowledge about India, I shall come to the end of my Essay. It is the Arab works on geography and travels in India by such writers as Sulaiman, Abu Zaid, Idrisi and Ibn Batuta. Besides a mere mention of this fact it is not possible to enter into it in any detail at this stage of the Essay. It is sufficient for our present purpose to know that most of these accounts are, as expected, a strange medley of facts and fictions and were well-known to mediæval Europe.

### Conclusion.

Such then is the history of European intercourse with India before the Portuguese discovery. 'An epitome of

the world' and favoured by Nature with her choicest blessings, India was looked upon as a very paradise on earth by the people of Europe. Poets sang of the 'thesauris Arabum et divitis Indiae,' and merchants and travellers carried away tales of a true 'Land of Cockaigne,' overflowing with milk and honey. It was a country rich in pearls and diamonds where the very rivers ran gold and where Nature decked in all her splendour presented an enchanting sight. Indian wisdom too, like Indian riches, passed into a proverb among the ancients, bringing over men like Pythagoras to drink at this fountain of human knowledge. Side by side with these were other ideas as well. There was nothing peculiar about Shakespeare's connecting his fairy king with 'the farthest steppe of India,' popular fancy having peopled that region with all sorts of chimerical beings. During the Middle Ages, when the works of the ancients were lost sight of and when travellers' visits to the east were few and far between, the old favourable notions about this country gradually passed away, and people began to talk of "savages and men of Inde" in the same breath. The confusion between the red-skinned cannibals of the newly discovered America with the highly civilised people of India was only a sign of the times. In a vain boast of superiority the mediæval European placed the latter in the category of idolators and savages whom Providence had unaccountably put in charge of a rich and fruitful land.

There is nothing, however, in all this that need surprise us at all, such vague and floating ideas being the only ones possible of an unfrequented and distant land. Do we not find nearly the same state of affairs even today when blue-books are piled on blue-books to Olympus and when novels dealing with Indian life issue in shoals from the press? Scarcely one man in a hundred has the merest wish to trouble himself about the manners and customs of

a foreign nation, while hardly one in a thousand can place himself in a point of view different from that to which he has been accustomed. Thus vagueness and want of sympathy must always to a certain extent remain the marks of foreign appreciation. There are no two countries in the world that are more closely in touch than India and England; and yet is it not true that the *average* Indian and the *average* Englishman are colossally ignorant about each other?

Hence men have not been found wanting who assert that the day will never come when the European and the Asiatic will fully appreciate the merits of each other and be fused together into one integral mass of humanity. To them the solidarity of the human race is a mere Utopian theory and 'the federation of the world' a poet's dream. "East is East and West West" is in their view a truth, hard and unsentimental no doubt, but none the less true for that.

But this at best is a narrow creed fit only for those who cannot look beyond the present and to whom the clouds pressing upon the horizon seem to last for ever. Although national prejudices still continue to play some part in the mutual dealings of the east and the west, although their complete amalgamation in race, creed and language would not be desirable, even if it were possible, it may at any rate be safely predicted that the two will gradually approach each other, through diminishing distance in feelings, like an asymptote to the curve. It is our sacred duty to shape the present to that glorious end by scouting all racial prejudices and by combining in ourselves the distinctive merits of the East and the West.





## Additional Notes.

(1)

### THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS.

The voyage of Nearchus justly deserves the high renown it enjoys. To lead a fleet manned by ignorant and superstitious sailors along an extensive and unknown coast required the exercise of the highest skill; and it did ample service to the cause of ancient geography. It stands alone in antiquity, if of course we leave out of consideration a similar expedition undertaken by Hanno along the west coast of Africa.

Nearchus himself kept a journal during the voyage, which lives for us in fragments in the writings of Arrian. The following sketch is indebted to Mr. Vincent A. Smith's newly published *Early History of India* pp. 90-101.

Various circumstances combined to detain Nearchus for some time in the western branch of the Indus; and even when he got out to sea he was weather-bound at a port for nearly a month. This harbour which he named after his master could not have been far away from the modern Karachi. Creeping then for five days along the coast the squadron reached the mouth of the river Arabis (now the Purali) which marked the western boundary of the country of the Arabioi, the last people of Indian origin settled in that direction. The next place reached was Kokala where Nearchus was able to communicate with a detachment of Alexander's army led by Leonnatos. The crew were suffering from want of provision and fresh water, and some of them were only too glad to be drafted into the army of Leonnatos, their place being taken by more adventurous men from the ranks of that general. The ships were repaired and victualled and Nearchus resumed the voyage. Sailing past a coast inhabited by savage warriors whose only weapons were big nails and a kind of wooden spears charred at the end to harden them, the squadron reached the rocky headland named Malana (now Rus Malin). Turning the promontory the voyagers came upon the coast of those whom they named Ichthyophagoi. Whales were numerous in the sea below that place and supplied the natives with materials for their houses which were built of whale bones, the huge jaws

serving as door-ways. Then came the uninhabited island of Nosala, weird tales about which very much frightened the superstitious seamen under Nearchus. This island still exists and is, says Mr. Smith, as much an object of dread to the Med fishermen of today as it was long ago to the Greeks. Sailing thence the mariners at last entered the Persian Gulf and found themselves at Hormozia (Ormuz), a charming place which produced every thing except olives. Here they were agreeably surprised at the tidings that Alexander's camp lay only a five days' march distant. Nearchus lost no time in seeing his master who did not at first recognise the weather-beaten admiral. After mutual greetings Alexander proceeded on his march towards Babylon, and Nearchus resumed his voyage and conducted the fleet up the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Euphrates. Thence he sailed up the river to Susa where he was cordially received by Alexander.

( 2 )

#### RABBI BENJAMIN OF TUDELLA (pp. 66-7).

There is a translation of his Travels in Pinkerton's Collection of Voyages &c., Vol. VII, p. 1. sq.

The Rabbi mentions an island called Nekrokis in the Persian Gulf, where there was a great trade in Indian goods, especially in silk and purple manufactures, hemp, cotton, flax, cloth and spices. It has been sought by some to identify this island with Ormuz, but there seems to be some difficulty in explaining the name given to it by the Rabbi.

It is probable that the Rabbi visited the west coast of India. He mentions a place which grew immense quantities of pepper and where the heat was so great that men were compelled to keep the house during the day. The people were mostly fire-worshippers and they exposed their dead to the mercy of the elements. This description might very well apply to the province of Malabar with its pepper cultivation and its large number of Parsee settlers.

We are next furnished with a very amusing theory of the origin of pearls. At a certain season of the year there fell from the stars a kind of dew, a drop of which, when sucked in by an oyster, turned into a pearl.\*

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\* In India also people believed that water falling from the star "Seali" (Arcturus) was transformed into pearls in oysters and in the skulls of elephants.

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